
QUADERNI DI “IN CAMMINO”

Notes “Along a Journey”

Gaetano Ciranni

**THE
ROGATE:
CHARISM
OF THE ROGATIONISTS**

Notes, testimonies, teachings

1

English Edition - 2020

CENTER FOR ROGATIONIST STUDIES

General Curia – Rome

Original title: *IL ROGATE: CARISMA DEI ROGAZIONISTI. Appunti, testimonianze, insegnamenti*, Supplement to *Studi Rogazionisti*, n. 104 (gennaio-marzo 2010) Roma.

Translation: Fr. Jessie Martirizar RCJ, Fr. Marcelino Diaz RCJ, Fr. Ulrich Gacayan, RCJ
General Editor: Fr. Jose Maria Ezpeleta RCJ

Authorized for printing:
Fr. Bruno Rampazzo RCJ

Superior General of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus

© Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus
Commission on Translations
Rome, September 24, 2020

First Centenary of the Birth of Fr. Gaetano Ciranni RCJ (1920-2020)



English translation sources:

Biblical citations: *Revised Standard Version*; citations from the Latin Vulgate: *Rheims-Duoy 1898 Version*.

Declarations and Promises: Appendix of the *Constitutions of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus*, 2010.

Documents of the Rogationist Congregation: official English translation.

Church documents: www.vatican.va.

Messages of the Popes: *L'osservatore Romano* English Edition; some published also in www.vatican.va.

Table of Contents

Editorial Notes

Notes on the English Edition

Foreword

Introduction

Who are the recipients?

Abbreviations

1. The Charisms
2. Charismatic Dimension of the Church – States of Life
3. The Charism of “Consecrated Life”
4. The Charism of the Founder
5. The Charism of the Founder or the Founding Charism
6. Definitions of the Founding Charism
7. The Founding Charism is a lived experience
8. The Charism is a safeguarded experience
9. The Charism is a deepened and constantly developed experience
10. Nature and structure of the Founding Chrism
11. Father Hannibal historizes (the inspiration of) the Rogate
 - 11.1. The Holy Spirit prepares Hannibal to receive the Rogate
 - 11.1.1.1. The holiness of life and the life of faith
 - 11.1.1.2. The sensibility, love, and compassion for the poor
 - 11.1.1.3. The intuition of the prayer to obtain good laborers
 - 11.2. The Holy Spirit enlightens and guides Hannibal
 - 11.3. The Rogate, initially, was a divine inspiration
 - 11.4. The Rogate, afterward, was a gospel revelation
12. Date and place of the first inspiration
13. From the Church to St. John of Malta to the Avignone Quarter
14. The Priestly-Religious Vocation
15. The Christ of the Rogate in the Gospels
 - 15.1. The mystery of consecration
 - 15.2. Consecration and holiness
 - 15.3. Consecration and mission
16. Jesus sees the crowds and feels compassion for them

17. Compassion is the primary element and soul of the Rogate
18. The plentiful harvest is in danger of being lost
 - 18.1. The harvest and its conditions
19. The Rogate and the intimate sorrows
 - 19.1. The intimate sorrows are a constitutive element of the Rogationist spirituality
 - 19.2. The intimate sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary
20. The Rogate, the mystery of collaboration
21. The fourth vow of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal
 - 21.1. To pray
 - 21.2. The prayer dimension of the fourth vow
22. The mystery of *ut mittat*
23. Why must we pray?
 - 23.1. Because God wants it
 - 23.2. Because the benefit is exclusively ours
 - 23.3. We must obey because it is a command
 - 23.4. The Obedience to the Rogate fosters, confirms, and sustains vocation
 - 23.5. Because Jesus prayed
24. Evangelical Rogation and holiness
25. The mystery of a presence
26. Eucharist and Rogation
27. The Eucharist, the Perennial Spring of the Rogate
28. Rogationist apostles of the Rogate
 - 28.1. Father Hannibal's teaching
 - 28.2. Father Hannibal, Apostle of the Rogate
 - 28.3. The Church's Response
 - 28.4. The Rogationists and the diffusion of the Rogate, today
 - 28.5. The Missionaries of the Rogate
29. Union of the Sacred Allies of the Rogate (USAR)
 - 29.1. The USAR is a divine revelation
 - 29.2. What works does Father Hannibal want to save?
 - 29.3. Without disregarding the charitable works
 - 29.4. Union is the constituent element of the USAR
 - 29.5. Who should pray and why?

- 29.6. The Eucharist, the heart of USAR
- 29.7. God's blessings on the greatest of works
- 29.8. The USAR at 360 degrees
- 29.9. Christ identifies himself with his Rogate
- 29.10. The Church recognizes herself in the Christ of the Rogate
- 29.11. Rogate – Priesthood – Eucharist
- 30. The Heavenly Rogationists
- 31. To be good laborers
 - 31.1. Relationship between the Rogate and Charitable Work
 - 31.2. Obligatory status of the apostolate of charity
 - 31.3. Apostolate of the orphans: reasons and hypotheses of the choice
 - 31.4. The Orphanages do not exclude other types of charitable works
 - 31.5. Apostolate of assistance and evangelization of the poor
 - 31.6. The Constitutions and the tradition
 - 31.7. Faithfulness to charitable works
- 32. Obedience to the Rogate
- 33. The spirituality of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal flows from the Rogate
 - 33.1. Note on visibility
 - 33.2. Visibility of the Rogate, from a vocational perspective
 - 33.3. Note on interiority
- 34. Eucharistic spirituality of the Rogationists
- 35. Dimensions of the Eucharistic Spirituality
- 36. The Agape Dimension of the Eucharistic Spirituality
 - 36.1 The Theological Reason for Communion in a Religious Community
 - 36.2. Charismatic Reasons for Eucharistic Spirituality
- 37. Agape-Rogate-Heart of Jesus
 - 37.1 The Rogate is the principle of eternal charity because the priest is a mystery of love
 - 37.2 The Rogate is the principle of eternal charity because the priesthood is the ministry of Christ's charity
- 38. The Marian Dimension of the Rogationist Spirituality
- 39. The Most Holy Name of Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Anthony of Padua
- 40. The Path of Faithfulness
 - 40.1 Jesus, Model of Faithfulness

40.2 Faithfulness to God's commandments

40.3 Faithfulness during the temporary profession

40.4 Faithfulness after perpetual profession

40.5 Fight to win

Appendix I – *The Consecrating Action of God in the Religious Profession*

Appendix II – *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (PUPV) – By-Laws*

Nature and purpose Organization

Practical commitments Spiritual and pastoral benefits Office

Appendix III – *Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV) – By-Laws*

Nature and mission Forms of membership Organization Spiritual benefits

Prayer for good laborers Offices

Editorial Notes

The present publication, *The Rogate: Charism of the Rogationists*, by Fr. Gaetano Ciranni, is the second issue of the recent series *Quaderni di "In Cammino"* (Notes "Along a Journey").

In Cammino (Along a Journey) is a magazine, conceived as a supplement to the *Studi Rogazionisti*, is born as an *aid to Rogationist formation*, i.e., to accompany the new phase of the ongoing formation desired by the IX General Chapter (1998) and promoted by the X General Chapter (2004) with the approval of the *Project of Rogationist Ongoing Formation* drawn up by the Government General during their six-year term, 1998-2004. So far, the magazine, which has been published without a precise chronological deadline but occasionally as needed, has come out with two initial issues (Supplement to numbers 65-66 and 67 of the *Studi Rogazionisti*) and several special issues dedicated to particular moments of formation at the level of the Congregation, such as the annual *Conference of the Superiors of Circumscription* (2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), the *International Meetings of Formators* (2002, 2005, 2008), and the *Seminars on the Rogationist Priestly Alliance* (2007-2008).

The new series, which always pursue formative goals, are published research studies of individual Rogationist confreres who want to offer their organic and systematic contribution on the topics on Rogationist Formation.

Notes on the English edition

1. Citations

- a. Quotations from Church documents are taken from official translations as published in <http://www.vatican.va>.
- b. The English translation of Bible quotes are taken from the *Revised Standard Version*.
In his writings, the Founder quotes the Bible in Latin using the *Vulgate* version. Some of these, particularly the Psalms, do not correspond to the current chapter and verse numbering. In these cases, the English translation is taken from the *Duoay-Rheims* 1899 version.
- c. The Author wrote these Notes in 2010. Understandably, he was quoting the *Constitutions and Norms* of the 1980 and 1998 editions. For integration, this English edition also reports texts of the current Constitutions of 2010 in some related topics.
- d. Quotations from the *Declarations and Promises* are taken from Appendix I of the English edition of the *Constitutions* of 2010. Most of the quotations from the documents of the Congregation are taken from the official English translations but retaining the reference to the pages in the Italian original.

2. Editor's Notes

- a. The translators and editor have included in the English edition some notes which they deemed important to better render the meaning of a term, expression, or context. In-text notes are enclosed in parentheses, ex. (= *word*), while the footnotes are marked with an asterisk and EN for **E**ditor's **N**ote (* EN:).

Foreword

I often read manuscripts for publication. But since I am not “in charge of the works,” I always do it with some difficulty, mainly for lack of time, but sometimes also for the nature and content of the texts. However, it was not for this volume. I was immediately attracted to it. First, for the topic itself, because it concerns me as a Rogationist; but also for its style: clear, passionate, and engaging.

The topic is all contained in the title: *The Rogate: Charism of the Rogationists*.
The style is immediately indicated by the subtitle: *Notes, Testimonies, Teachings*

On the meaning of the title, or the subject of the volume, there is nothing to clarify. The reader who belongs to the Family of the Rogate immediately guesses what it is. And for those who, although with a Rogationist background especially the young ones, would not be able to understand it immediately, they will have a precise idea reading through the text.

It is proper, however, to say something about the subtitle. I do so by asking the reader the same questions that emerged spontaneously to my mind after reading it: which notes, which testimonies, whose teachings are contained in it?

Certainly, they are those of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, the Founder of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. The author himself said it in the introductory notes: “The reflections develop in a particular way around citations taken from the *Writings* of the Founder: both because we find in them the exact terms for the *understanding of the Rogate*^{*}; and because, being mostly autobiographical, they project the image of the charismatic Head, of the one who has identified himself in an absolute and all-encompassing manner with the Rogate, and therefore, represents the model that the Rogationist must imitate.”

The book, however, is not a collection of writings of the Father Hannibal Di Francia. Rather, they constitute the main source which the author refers to in the development of the topic that continually leads back to the thought and experience of our Holy Founder.

So, the notes, testimonies, and teachings in the subtitles are also those of the Author of the book.

Fr. Gaetano Ciranni,^{**} in fact, knows well the life and thought of Father Hannibal because he has long scrutinized latter’s writings and assimilated their spirit in his research and prayer. It should also be noted that he was the Superior General of the Rogationists for two consecutive terms right after the Vatican Council II, the time when religious life was characterized by a profound renewal through the return to the sources and the search for the original charismatic inspiration. Precisely at that time, Fr. Ciranni distinguished himself by his passion and knowledge in reflection, in the updating of the charismatic identity of the Congregation, and his apostolic choices.

His thought on the Rogationist charism is recorded in his various teachings when he was the Superior General, in his contributions to the drafting of the various General Chapter documents and the fundamental articles of the current Constitutions, and now also in this book

^{*} EN: St. Hannibal Mary’s expression *intelligenza del Rogate* is literally translated into English as the *intelligence of the Rogate*. This English edition translates it as *understanding of the Rogate*.

^{**}EN: Fr. Gaetano Ciranni (September 24, 1920 – July 26, 2014) was the Superior General of the Rogationist Congregation from 1974 to 1986. This year is the first centenary of his birth, in the occasion of which the publication of this English edition is dedicated.

in which he collects and transmits his long experience of Rogationist life. Here, in a particular way, he offers a well-articulated synthesis of the charism in its historical and evangelical origin, in its theological, spiritual, and apostolic elements. The reflections that he proposes are often original and unprecedented, uniquely his thoughts, that makes him a qualified “master” of the Rogate.

Moreover, the nature and objectives of the book can be better understood if one takes into consideration the context in which it was written: **the Rogationist novitiate**. It is therefore about a text that has not been elaborated over a writing-desk, but it came out from a lively encounter with the young people eager to know the Rogationist religious life in its evangelical, historical, and charismatic foundations. The various chapters, in fact, are originally *oral conversations* that the Author defines simply as “some basic considerations on the mystery of the Rogate.” The process for the publication has not changed the original nature of the texts. They retain the freshness and immediacy of a conversation, characteristic of notes for lessons.

Who are the readers of the book? I would spontaneously say the Rogationist **novices**, the novices of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, the **formators**. Certainly, this is true, given its origin. I am convinced, however, that this is **for everyone**. In the field of formation, in fact, we always remain “novices,” because according to the teaching of the saints, Father Hannibal included, we can, and we must start anew every day.

We are, therefore, thankful to the Author for these lessons on the Rogationist charism held at the novitiate and which now, in the form of a book, become teachings for all the members of the Family of the Rogate: the Religious and the laity. We are all the more grateful when we take into consideration that the transformation of these *notes for an oral lecture* into chapters of a book, took place during the period of particular physical suffering that limited the activities of Fr. Ciranni.

This circumstance makes this publication even more precious because it gives the value of *witnessing and transmission* of an experience of life, so that the new generations, above all, may know, welcome, and live the Rogate as a “special vocation” for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Antonio Fiorenza

Introduction

This issue contains simply the reflections I made in the meetings with the Rogationist novices on the charism of the Rogate, handed over by the Holy Spirit to St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, who has institutionalized it in the foundation of the Congregations of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

The main purpose for which they were written was to allow the recipients to continue to reflect during the study hours on the various points discussed during the oral conversations.

These are *some* very *elementary* considerations, for basic knowledge of the charism that defines the identity of the person consecrated to the Rogate, which should be the object of his study, prayer, and life beginning from the novitiate.

Some, because many others can and must be done on the Rogate-mystery, which among the founding charisms, is distinguished by its essentiality in view of the coming of the kingdom.

Elementary, because the Rogate, indeed, for its exceptional soteriological traits, requires an experts' scientific research. At present, there are many written and published studies on the charism of the Rogate in various articles, doctoral theses, and conference proceedings, organized and celebrated by the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

The reflections develop in a particular way around citations taken from the *Writings* of the Founder: both because we find in them the exact terms for the understanding of the Rogate; and because, being mostly autobiographical, they project the image of the charismatic Head, the one who has identified himself in an absolute and all-encompassing manner with the Rogate, and therefore, represents the model that the Rogationist must imitate.

There is no lack of references to the Magisterium of the Church and especially to that of Paul VI and John Paul II, the Pope who proclaimed our Founder as a saint and, on various occasions, addressed messages to the Rogationists.

The frequent recurrence of some citations and concepts is intentional, either because they are placed in different and complementary contexts and perspectives, or because they are of fundamental importance.

I consider the insistence on some particular topics (Eucharist, holiness, spirituality, etc.) as necessary to create among the young who are just starting their *iter* in the basic formation, the conviction that for an authentic, conscious, and integral growth in their vocation to the Rogate, it is necessary to offer them a *habitat* endowed with the characteristic elements proper and connected to the charismatic *proprium*, according to the understanding, teachings, spirit, and experience lived by our Holy Founder.

Who are the recipients?

The title [*The Rogate: Charism of the Rogationists*] could be misleading. The Rogate is not a private charism, an exclusive property of the Rogationists. It is a gift that Christ has given to his Church, through St. Hannibal, who repeatedly reiterates that no faithful, in whatever state of life and personal vocation, can exempt himself from the command to pray the Lord of the harvest to obtain good laborers (cf. chapters. 23.2 and 29.5); and he himself moved heaven and earth so that the evangelical Rogation would become universal and unceasing (cf. chapter 29).

Who then, are the Rogationists? All those who share and live the Rogate according to the understanding and teachings of St. Hannibal. They are:

1. The members of the Religious Congregations founded by St. Hannibal, the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. In these pages, [unless they are expressions and statements that have specific and exclusive reference to the priesthood] whatever is said of the Rogationists applies also to the Daughters of Divine Zeal in the absolute sense. It is because the Daughters of Divine Zeal has the same Founder, the same charism, the same vows, the same spiritual patrimony, the same spirituality, and the same mission.
2. The Missionaries of the Rogate, lay women consecrated to the Rogate.
3. The Bishops, priests, religious of other Congregations who are members of the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations.
4. The lay people enrolled in the Union of Prayer for Vocations.
5. Other Lay Organizations included in the U.A.R. (Union of Rogationist Associations).

At the charismatic level, they all are on the same level, even though they differ in ways of embodying the same charism: the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal in a radical form and all-encompassing way through the bond of religious profession; the laity in ways that vary according to the state of life and social status, and as indicated in their respective By-Laws.

The Constitutions and Norms of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the By-Laws of the other associative expressions, in relation to the Rogate, indicate the same obligations: to pray – to spread the prayer – to be good laborers. In fact,

1. They refer to the same charism, the genetic point, and the inspiring principle of all their activities.
2. They pray to the Lord of the Harvest with the same prayer commanded by Christ to obtain good laborers for his harvest.
3. They express the same mission of spreading the Rogate and apostolate of charity in favor of the little ones and the poor, according to their respective By-Laws.

Thanks to this complementarity in diversity, each member of the various categories establishes an organic relationship with all the others who follow the “Christ of the Rogate”, to form a single Family of the Rogate in a charismatic dimension.

It is enough to read the Table of Contents to understand that all members of the *Family of the Rogate* can use the reflections contained in this book, even though the style and treatment of the topics highlight the original nature and purpose of the work, i.e., intended for the novices who are preparing for the religious profession; and thus, they are the first recipients.

Messina, March 16, 2010

Gaetano Ciranni

Abbreviations

AdR	Apostles of the Rogate
AP	Anima del Padre (<i>The Father's Soul</i>)
AR	Antologia Rogazionista (<i>Rogationist Anthology</i>)
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CFL	Christifidelis laici
Church of St. John of Malta	Church of St. John of Malta
DC	Decreti Capitolari (<i>Chapter Decrees</i>)
ECC	Eucarestia, comunione e comunità. Documento pastorale dell'Episcopato italiano
EdE	Ecclesia de Eucharistia
EE	Essential Elements of the Teaching of the Church on the Religious Life
EP	Eucharistic Prayer
FLC	Fraternal life in community
GS	Gaudium et spes
LC	Father Hannibal: Circular Letters to the Congregants, Oct. 28, 1911
LG	Lumen gentium
MB	Memorie biografiche (<i>Biographical memories</i>)
MR	Mutuae relationes
OT	Optatam totius
PC	Perfectae caritatis
PdV	Pastores dabo vobis
PO	Presbyterorum ordinis
PPA	Prefazione alle Preziose Adesioni (<i>Preface to the Precious Adhesions</i>)
PS	Positio
RHP	Religious and human promotion
SC	Sacramentum caritatis
VC	Vita consecrata

1. The Charisms

Before starting this reflection on the Rogate, the founding charism of the Rogationists, I consider it is useful to recall briefly some fundamental concepts about charisms in general, the charismatic dimension of the Church, and the charism of the “consecrated life” as such. These notions are closely and fundamentally connected with the charism of founders.

The term ‘charism’ comes from Greek *charisma*, [from the root: *charis* = grace], which means ‘free gift.’ In the New Testament – except for 1 Pt 4:10 – only Paul used the term ‘carisma.’

The CCC in no. 799 defines charisms as follows: *Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and the needs of the world.*

Charisms are supernatural gifts of the Spirit. It should not to be confused with natural gifts, talents, and abilities that a person can possess; or with the infused virtues; or with the sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), a gift given to all by the Spirit in Baptism, primarily for the sanctification of those who receive it. St. Paul teaches that the charisms are given gratuitously and freely by the Spirit to the person *for the good of all*, i.e., they are essentially ecclesial gifts that are ordained for the building up of the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith... (Rm 12:4-6; cf. Eph 4:15-16)

Vatican Council II teaches:

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, “allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit” (1 Cor 12:7). [LG 12].

In Baptism, Christ takes us ontologically to form an organic unity joined in his name by the bond of love, each working with his own charisms, for the good of the whole Mystical Body: *As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace (1 Pt 4:10).*

Theologians define these charisms as *gratiae gratis datae* [graces freely given], purposely for the use of others. The charisms can be:

- a. “personal and temporary” (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-11): The utterance of wisdom, the gift of healing, the power to work miracles, the discernment of the spirit, the varieties of tongues, the interpretation of the tongues. The Spirit freely gives them as he wishes depending on the need of the Church.

b) "personal and permanent" (cf. 1 Cor 12:28): Therefore, God has placed some in the Church first as apostles, second as prophets, third as teachers; then come the miracles, then the gifts of healing, the gifts of assistance, of governing, of tongues.

Saint Paul deals with the theology and ecclesiology of charisms in chapters 12, 13, 14 of the First Letter to the Corinthians.

What and how many charisms has Father Hannibal, our Holy Founder, received? Certainly, more than one. At this moment, we are interested in the charisms that refer to the Rogate, the charism of the religious Congregations he founded; concerning which, he received the charism of the founder and that of foundation.

But even before these charisms, he has received from the Spirit the personal, permanent, and extraordinary charism of the *understanding of the Rogate*, i.e., the interpretation of the Rogate-Word. We can also say that he had the charism of "hermeneutical-key" for the comprehension in the fullness of the truth of the Rogate-Word.

CCC No. 66 reads as follows:

Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made entirely explicit [i.e., thoroughly explained, understood, developed]; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the centuries. Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth...he will glorify me because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you (Jn 16:13-14).

The charism of the Rogate falls into the category of the "private revelations", but it has a public purpose, in as much as it is essentially of interest to the whole Church.

Let us not enter into a discussion on the Catholic doctrine on revelation.¹ Let us simply say that the Holy Spirit gave our Founder the understanding of the Rogate-Word, which until then, no one has had it. The Holy Spirit through an immediate communication to the intellect of Hannibal, the man chosen by God, removed the veil that covered the depth of the Rogate- Mystery, the originating-cause of both the charism of the founder and the founding charism.

13

2. Charismatic Dimension of the Church – States of Life

Before the Vatican Council II, the theologico-pneumatological aspect of the Church was little considered. The Church was defined as *societas perfecta* (*perfect society*), or worse, *societas inequalis* (*hierarchical society*), considering the clerics and the laity as two unequal categories, placed on different levels.

Pope John Paul II during the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements held in Rome for Pentecost of 1998 affirms:

There is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension [= hierarchical structure of the Church] and the charismatic dimension, of which the movements are a significant expression. Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his

¹¹ *Revelation and mystery* are topics amply discussed by Mario Di Pasquale in *Intelligenza e Zelo del Rogate*, in Quaderni di "In cammino" n. 1, 2009, Rome.

saving work present in the world (“Avvenire,” May 28, 1998, p.17; www.vatican.va).

With the Vatican Council II, we became aware that with baptism, all the members of the Church participate in the priestly, kingly, and prophetic office of Christ, with equal dignity. No one, whatever the gift received, must be considered superior to others. We are all on the same level with different ministries (cf. LG 32).

In analogy with the body, even the ecclesial body involves a diversity of proper and complementary positions and functions. Thus, the distinction between the laity, the clergy, and the religious, is only functional, according to their own charisms.

From this derives the various charisms and the theological foundation of the different “states of life” in the Church (cf. Rm 12:4-5, 1 Cor 12:29-30; Eph 4:11-12); where each member has his own personality and a specific mission, *secundum mensuram donationis Christi* [according to the measure of Christ’s gift] (Eph 4:7).

The Council distinguishes the baptized into three fundamental constitutive categories of Church: Clergy, laity, religious, to which the *Lumen Gentium* dedicates respectively the third, the fourth, and the sixth chapters. Three Synods of bishops were organized to deepen theologically and ecclesialogically these three categories, respectively.

- a. The vocation and mission of the *laity* in the Church and in the world (October 1987), which produced the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Christifideles laici* [CFL], of December 30, 1988;
- b. The formation of *priests* in the present circumstances (October 1990), followed by the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis* [PdV], of March 25, 1992;
- c. The *consecrated life* and its mission in the Church and in the world (October 1994) followed by the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* [VC], of March 25, 1996

14

All three constitutive states of life of the people of God represent the three fundamental charisms of and in the Church. They are brought into being by their respective consecrations: the laity, consecrated with the sacrament of baptism; the clergy through the sacrament of Holy Orders; the religious in the profession of the evangelical counsels. We read a summary of the composition of the Mystical Body of Christ in the CFL.

In Church Communion, the states of life by being ordered one to the other are thus bound together among themselves. They all share in a deeply basic meaning: that of being the manner of living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love. They are different yet complementary, in the sense that each of them has a basic and unmistakable character which sets each apart, while at the same time each of them is seen in relation to the other and placed at each other’s service [CFL, 55b].

The laity has a secular character, the clergy the ministerial, and the religious the conformation to the virgin, poor and obedient Christ. In nos. 31 and 32 of the VC, the Pope expounded the specific functions of the three states of life.

3. The Charism of “Consecrated Life”

Consequently, to what was mentioned above, consecrated life as such has its own typical charismatic identity, regardless of the multiplicity of charisms proper to every religious institute. That the state of the consecrated life in itself is a charism is repeatedly reaffirmed by John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation VC, which begins with these words: *The consecrated life, deeply rooted in the example and the teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit* (LG 43).

In no. 2 of the same document, we read: *We are aware of the treasure which the gift of the consecrated life in the variety of its charisms and institutions represents in the ecclesial community.*

No. 3 brings back the affirmation of the Synod. *At the Synod, it was stated on several occasions that the consecrated life has not only proved to be a help and support for the Church in the past but is also a precious and necessary gift for the present and future of the people of God since it is an intimate part of her life, her holiness, and her mission.*

Consecrated persons with the profession of the evangelical counsels, whatever their specific charism may be, have the duty to *re-present* the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, as the Vatican Council II attests: *In the same way, the religious state accurately exemplified and perpetually made present in the Church a form of life that the Son of God embraced when he came on earth to do the will of the Father and proposes it to his disciples to follow* (LG 44; VC, 22).

The charism of consecrated life constitutes the common and essential dimension of all the Institutes. Every specific charism finds support, concreteness, and richness in the profession of the evangelical counsels, which refer to the mystery of Christ, the totality of his person, his following, and communion with him.

The insistence with which the Rogationists speak of their proper charism and the laudable commitment to study and to deepen it could lead to a risk of absolutizing it, losing its due emphasis on the essential quality of the evangelical counsels and their related theological and ecclesiological values.

The understanding and knowledge of the Rogate cannot be limited to the fourth vow but must extend to the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

The Rogationist must refer to and conform himself toward Christ, fully living the mystery of the Rogate, embodying it in its concreteness and totality of the life lived by the Word of God, who assumed a human face, the face of the chaste, poor, and obedient man.

If the Rogationist wanted to limit his conformation to Christ only in the specific track of the Rogate, leaving out the fundamental dynamism of the person of Christ (chastity, poverty obedience), he would not only deform his identity but would completely nullify it.

There is even more. To the extent that the Rogationist is chaste, poor, and obedient, in that measure, he elevates to the highest level the personal conformation to Christ, the attraction, and witnessing the effectiveness of the distinctive consecration to the Rogate. And vice-versa. And this is not because our literature or the Magisterium of the Church impose it on us, but because this is the way the Christ of the Rogate lived. Such should existentially be the life of

the Rogationist, who wants and must be able to affirm with all sincerity: *for me to live is Christ of the Rogate*.

We cannot ignore the teaching and example of our Holy Founder, Father Hannibal, who imposed on himself an observance of the evangelical counsels with the most rigorous radicality. He lived them in holiness characterized by sensibility, spiritual finesse, and nobility, reaching the highest peak of heroism, hardly found in other religious saints, as is found in the autobiographical writings, various biographies, and many other testimonies. The fifth of the *Declarations and Promises* deals with the evangelical counsels with the expressions that recall the need to live them without reserve and for supernatural motives.

The identity of the Rogationist is the Christ of the Rogate; he achieves it when he lives the dominant desire to reach the highest level of conformation and identification to him in the totality of his person. This demands above all the sublimity of the Rogate and its essentiality for the coming of the Kingdom. The objective ecclesial importance of the charism of the Rogate demands radical conformation to Christ, as can be deduced not only from how the Founder embodied it but also from his constant and abundant teaching.²

The truth of the identity of those consecrated to the Rogate, which constitutes their distinctive “Religious-ego”, comes from the totality of elements that are integrated into the person of the chaste, poor, and obedient Christ, who proposes himself to Father Hannibal and his followers so that they would *re-present* him in the Church and the world with the characteristic of the specific charism.

² Regarding Holy Chastity, what shall I say and what promises will I make for such an outstanding religious virtue and vow? Ah, I recognize that this is that precious virtue which Jesus Christ the Lord brought to earth to give as an endowment to His chosen Ministers and to those fortunate souls whom, in His mercy, He calls to a most intimate union of love by way of the religious life. [...] I recognize that a religious sinning against chastity, would render himself unworthy to remain any longer in the Congregation: he would merit to be expelled. And the Congregation which tolerates within its fold a member who has become so corrupt, or a Congregation in which God is offended even secretly by this sin, will already have deteriorated in the sight of the Most High (*Declarations and Promises*, V).

May God grant that this Little Community be a chosen garden of pure lilies, pleasing to him. *Qui pascitur inter lilia* [He feeds among the lilies] (Ct 2:16). But if this should not be the case, let us pray to the Supreme God that he destroys this little seed right at its beginning (*Regulations to the Rogationist Postulants*, 1898).

In the draft of the constitutions of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, Father Hannibal defines the “Most precious” vow of Chastity and he put in the first place of the priority list (Chastity, Poverty, Obedience) as opposed to the traditional way, anticipating the Vatican Council II (cf. *Draft of the Constitutions of the Daughters of Divine Zeal*, Jan 6, 1912).

...With what concerns Holy Poverty, I declare to acknowledge it as the most precious pearl and as a solid foundation not only of my vocation but also of the existence of the entire Institute. [...] Consecrating myself to this Institute, I intend to consecrate myself to evangelical poverty with great fervor and love, contemplating it in the adorable person of Our Lord Jesus and the Most Holy Virgin. [...] But if one relaxes in his love for the practice of Holy Poverty, it is destined to failure and dissolution, as it happened miserably with many religious Institutes (*Declarations and Promises*, V).

Regarding Holy Obedience, I declare that this virtue forms the very life and existence of every Religious Institute [...] I firmly recognize that Holy Obedience is a virtue of perfect sanctification and perfect union with God because by obeying the Superior and the Rule, one fulfills the Will of God perfectly (*Declarations and Promises*, V).

At the bidding of obedience, we must leave everything, even a work barely started, or a word we are about to write, or a Glory be we are reciting (*Regulations to the Rogationist Postulants*, 1898).

4. The Charism of the Founder

The charism of the founder is absolutely a personal (therefore not transmittable) gift; in this chapter, we will trace the figure of the chosen one to whom the Spirit has entrusted the gift.

We find the notes listed below, which connote the person of the founders of the religious institutes, present precisely in the Holy Founder of the Rogationists, Father Hannibal.

a) The founder is a man whom God chooses, calls, and sends to collaborate with Christ in the history of salvation. The Holy Spirit who “spoke through the prophets”, speaks even today through the founders, who can declare: *factum est verbum Domini ad me dicens* – [The word of the Lord came to me saying] (Jer 1:4).

The founder has the certainty, not the probability, that God spoken to him; and he hears that word burning within him like a fire in his bones. We read of Father Hannibal that that word, *Rogate*, was a word dictated by the fire coming from heaven into his bones: *de excelso misit ignem in ossibus meis et erudit me* [from above he has sent fire into my bones] (Lam 1:13; Jer 20:9; AP, p. 107; cf. below, in 11.2).

b) At the beginning of a Religious Institute, the first movement is made by the Holy Spirit, who brings to the chosen one both the “charism of the founder” and the “founding charism.” The person is appointed by the Transcendent. He feels the presence of the Spirit in his life. However, the perception and the assessment of the charismatic project are not usually understood immediately in its totality. But they acquire precise boundaries through historical mediations, conditions, and contradictions. As regards the concrete realization of the work, the time frame is usually longer.

c) The most evident characteristic of a founder is the spiritual dimension. He is a man possessed by the Spirit. Often, he is called a *man of the Spirit, a historical vanguard of the Spirit, an essential historical mediation of the Spirit, a privileged space of the Spirit* (in reference to Father Hannibal, cf. below in no. 11.2).

d) Seized by Christ and rooted and built up in him (Col 2:7), he offers his total availability to the inspiration of the Spirit. He allows the Spirit to guide him, and with the Spirit, undertakes the function as the chosen instrument. In fact, the Spirit remains the main agent in his life.

e) The founder has the certainty and the firm conviction that it is God’s will to found a particular religious congregation. However, he can only have the objective certitude that it is truly a divine inspiration with the approval of the competent authority of the Church.

The Church has the responsibility to discern the authenticity of a founding charism that should have specific essential characteristics. We can find some of these in numbers 12 and 51 of *Mutuae Relationes* (MR): 1. A certain element of genuine originality for the spiritual life of the Church. 2. A particular purposeful initiative. 3. Subordination to the sacred hierarchy. 4. A unique gift originating from the Spirit. 5. A profound passion of the soul to configure oneself to Christ, to give witness to whatever aspect of his mystery. 6. A constructive love for the Church.

We perfectly find all these characteristics in the charism of the Rogate.

f) The founder receives from the Spirit not only the charism of the founder and of foundation but also the understanding of the elements of the specific spirituality, of the relative mission within the Church, and the means to reach the goal.

g) The founder cannot but possess an eminent and exemplary way the cardinal virtue of fortitude, sometimes even heroically. Because of the good that the Religious Institute is doing, the devil unleashes violent hurricanes against him and the nascent work, and not only from the outsiders but sometimes even from the members of the same Institute. Among the characteristic traits of the Religious Institute, the document MR, 12 underlines...*The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross, which [...] is supremely helpful in discerning the authenticity of a vocation.*³

h) Another essential trait of the founder is fruitful paternity. The founder is the first to live the founding experience, he follows Christ in the charismatic distinctiveness in such a radical, exciting, involving, and contagious way, to attract others to live the same experience. Furthermore, he will personally inform and form the first followers about the terms of this distinctive consecration.

i) Lastly, he and not others, must draw up the constitutions of the Institute, at least dictating the fundamental guidelines on the nature of the Institute and the *proprium* of the founding charism.⁴

5. The Charism of the Founder or the Founding Charism*

18

The expression *charism of the founders* appears for the first time in the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971).

The charism of the founder is also said to be the founding charism of the Institute, whether communitarian, collective, or apostolic. Substantially, these terms have the same meaning, with some slight differences depending on the vantage point.

The founding charism is the gift that the Spirit initially gives to the founder and, through his mediation, to all those who join him to live the same experience of the Spirit, to respond to

³ In the *Regulation of the Co-founders and Co-foundresses* (November 8, 1910), Father Hannibal describes the four struggles he had to bear: diabolical, earthly, interior, and divine.

⁴ Fr. Francesco Vitale (the first successor to the guidance of the Congregation of the Rogationists), who has collaborated with Father Hannibal in drafting the Constitutions, did not do other than take the various Rules written by the Founder which are evangelical ideals of the first inspiration, the fundamental directions, the unchangeable charismatic principles, and the specific mission and encoded them in the first Constitutions (1926). Legitimately, it can be said that the Constitutions were written by the Father Founder, not only because he personally revised and fine-tuned the work of Fr. Vitale but also by virtue of the *iter* (*process* = indications of Father Hannibal) followed by Fr. Vitale in elaborating it.

In the Regulations and in the drafts of the Constitutions written for the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists, the Founder demonstrates a perfect understanding of the Rogate as a supreme means to obtain the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In these splendid pages, which will be completed with the ecclesiastical approved in 1926, we read affirmations of enchanting clarity and precision about the specific charism.

* EN: The Author uses the term *carisma fondazionale* which is translated literally in English as *foundational charism*. It is also translated as *charism of foundation*, which this English edition adopts in as much as it is the term commonly used in the Church documents (ex. *Vita Consecrata* nos. 12, 36, 49, 61, 62, 72, 73, 79, etc.).

God who calls them and to realize one's vocation.

We have also said that the founding charism is a gift. But what does this gift consist of? We can say, quite simply, that it consists of a particular aspect, virtue, and moment that characterizes and specifies the unfathomable mystery of Christ in his earthly existence.

We read an ample exemplification in MR, from which we take some citations.

Indeed, the consecration of those professing religious vows is specially ordained to this purpose, namely of offering to the world visible proof of the unfathomable mystery of Christ, inasmuch as in themselves they really present [Author: today we prefer to say: "re-present"] "Christ in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all men, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent Him." (LG 46; MR, 10).

We may add: or when seeing the abandoned crowds, he said: *The harvest is great... Pray, therefore...*

There are many Religious Institutes in the Church, each differing one from the other according to its proper character (cf. PC 7, 8, 9, 10). Each, however, contributes its own vocation as a gift raised up by the Spirit through the work of outstanding men and women (cf. LG 45; PC 1; 2), and authentically approved by the sacred hierarchy (MR11).

The Council degree *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC) on the renewal of the Religious Life states: *[...] in accordance with the Divine Plan a wonderful variety of religious communities has grown up which had made it easier for the Church not only to be equipped for every good work [...] and ready for the work of ministry – the building up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:12) (PC 1).*

The mysterious personality of Christ can be likened to a mosaic, where each founding charism is a tile; or as a sturdy tree whose branches, different from one another, reveal the overbearing vitality of the trunk, which makes its vital sap flow in all the branches. It is an evident sign of the extraordinary richness of the gift that the Spirit bestows on his Church.⁵

Each Religious Institute, in the same manner that it has a proper denomination, has its proper physiognomy, a spiritual face, an unmistakable and unrepeatable identity, which distinguishes it from the others, and dynamically become part of the Church with its own (= *proprium*) particular service or ministry for the edification of the Mystical Body of Christ.

These characteristic elements and the distinctive traits have their origin in and are intimately connected with the founding charism, by virtue of which each Religious Institute is part of the communal structure of the Church, in the multiformity of vocational projects, establishing the broad and complementary diversity of ministries.

The Vatican Council II and the subsequent Magisterium have addressed an urgent call to the Religious Institutes to become aware and safeguard at all costs their specific charismatic identity. The document MR, which is guiding us in our preliminary reflections, states in no. 11 that *it is necessary to preserve the identity of each institute so securely, that the danger of an ill-defined situation be avoided, lest religious, failing to give due consideration to the particular mode of action proper to their character, become part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way.*

⁵ The Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Society of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) affirms that we have today 71 Institutes of Contemplative Life, 246 timesmale Institutes, 1,347 female Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, and 60 Secular Institutes, with a total of 1,782. *EN: This statistic should be updated with the latest data.*

Such a repeated insistence is justified by the fact that over the centuries many Religious Institutes did not take their charism in due consideration, which had become a vague, indecisive reality, not perfectly known, and thus, taken into little account.

Before the Vatican Council II, the terms charism, spirituality, identity, vocational *proprium* were mortified, if not ignored. The Code of Canon Law and the ecclesiastical norms which regulate the life and structure of the Religious Institutes were strictly juridical.

Even the Constitutions were drafted according to the jurisprudence of the time, reducing the duties to be assumed by the religious to a minimum for the purpose of inner tranquility regarding the fulfillment of the vows. It was not allowed at all to place in the text of the Constitutions inspiring principles, quotations of the Bible, of the Councils, and the holy fathers.

In our first Constitutions (1926), it explicitly said that to fulfill the vow of the Rogate, it would be sufficient to recite even just once in the day the short prayer: *Domine messis, mitte operarios in messem tuam* [Send O Lord, workers to your harvest].

Our Founder, who did not have the legalistic mentality of religious consecration, but the “pneumatic” mentality that flourished after the Vatican Council II, had to exclude from the main text of the Constitutions, and put in the appendix, the splendid pages on the assistance and evangelization of the poor; this text has been included in the appendix of the current Constitutions (2004).

Because of this distorted view of the Consecrated Life, the Vatican Council II wanted all Institutes to celebrate Special General Chapters, with the intention of returning to the sources, to rediscover and recover the exact terms of the original charism and its evangelical experience lived and bequeathed by the founder.

The Rogationists, too, celebrated the Special General Chapter in two periods, not so much to rediscover but to deepen the Rogate and to re-elaborate the Constitutions according to the new norms issued by the Church.

The judgment expressed by the reviewer-editors of the Constitutions is truly flattering:

The 1980 Chapter spoke with such precision, depth, and understanding of the charism of the Founder, a charism that is centered in an unequivocal way [not frequently found in the history of the Religious Congregations] and sure about a unique theological reality: the commitment of special consecration to follow Christ, chaste, poor, obedient in the lives of men completely dedicated, by the special calling of the Spirit, to the grace of the Rogate.

6. Definitions of the Founding Charism

We said that the charism is a gift of the Spirit; that the various charisms respond to the *unfathomable mystery of Christ*. But how is founding charism is defined? Scholars of Consecrated Life have formulated different descriptive definitions. We prefer to briefly analyze what the Magisterium of the Church offers us in the document MR (SCRSI and of the Bishops, 1978) and, at a later stage, those elaborated by the Rogationist General Chapter of 1980.

The very “charism of the Founders” (ET 11) appears as an “experience of the Spirit”, transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened, and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. “It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved

and fostered by the Church” (LG 44; cf. CD 33; 35, 1; 35, 2; etc.) (MR, 11).

First of all, the document states that the charism is an “experience”. Let us immediately say that the concept of experience is very complex. It is not possible to give it an all-encompassing definition. The life of every man is a fabric of pleasant and heart-rending experiences. Even Jesus on the cross passed through the most tormenting experiences, in feeling abandoned by the heavenly Father.

In the spiritual sphere, the most beautiful experience is that of the saints who feel the presence of God in their lives: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him* (Jn 14:23).

St. Paul offers us a genuinely emblematic example. The Apostle was deeply in love with Christ that he could say: *it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Gal 2:20). The breath of Christ is the breath of Paul. Christ becomes the subject of all Paul’s actions, whose personality was not annulled, but is rather transfigured. We could define such experience of Paul as “existential”.

To this category belongs the charismatic experience lived by Father Hannibal in relation to the Rogate and should also be the experience of all his followers.

To experience the Christ of the Rogate is the Rogationist’s reason for living, as it was in an absolutely all-encompassing way for the Founder (cf. below, in 13).

It is an experience which in the Johannine language is identified with the type of knowledge that is not only placed in the intellectual sphere but expressed in an intimate personal relationship and “communion” (cf. 1 Jn 1:3), that is, a participation in the same life (cf. Jn 15:1ff).

From the definition, which is the object of our analysis, it is clear that the founding charism is not a theory but a reality that was, in the first place, lived by the Founder and transmitted by him *to his followers to be: 1. lived, 2. safeguarded, 3. deepened and continuously developed*.

21

7. The founding charism is a lived experience

First of all, it must be *lived*. To live the same experience as the founder is the absolute priority commitment and the basis of every other dynamism of the religious. But what does living the experience mean? How does one live an experience?

Let us get back the two terms that we have highlighted and underlined: *visible witnessing* and *re-present* (cf. above, in 5).

We can reduce these two expressions to one: “*re-produce*”. To be able to re-present a person, it is necessary, in some way, to reproduce him. In fact, ours is not just any witnessing but a real, concrete, and visible witnessing. If it is not visible, then it cannot be a witnessing. John Paul II exhorts the religious to give a significant witnessing, and he gives the reason for it:

Their lifestyle too must clearly show the ideal which they profess, and thus present itself as a living sign of God and as an eloquent, albeit often silent, proclamation of the Gospel. The Church must always seek to make her presence visible in everyday life, especially in

contemporary culture, which is often very secularized and yet sensible to the language of signs. In this regard, the Church has a right to expect a significant contribution from consecrated persons, called as they are in a situation to bear clear witness that they belong to Christ. Since the habit is a sign of consecration, poverty, and membership in a particular Religious family, I join the Fathers of the Synod in strongly recommending to men and women religious that they wear their proper habit, suitably adapted to the conditions of time and place (VC, 25).

The document *Essential Elements of the Church's Teaching on Religious Life* (EE) dedicates the whole of chapter 6 to the witnessing that religious must offer to the world. It reiterates several times that it must be a witnessing given certainly with words, but above all with life. The first example of witnessing given in this document is that of Jesus, *the witness of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit*. It continues with the witnessing of the apostles:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:1-3).

The religious must relive the existential project of Jesus, not only through the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience but also by assuming and representing in his life the particular aspect of the life of Christ, that responds to the charismatic elements that define him in “being that Religious” and differentiating him from others.

Christ is the truth of man. He is the ideal of every Christian. God has *predestined us to be conformed according to the image of his Son* (Rm 8:29). That means that our identity of life is found in Christ, according to the specific vocation we have received. The Christ of the Rogate must be the truth of the Rogationist who is called to copy and re-present him in the moment of seeing *the crowds, he felt compassion for them because they were tired and exhausted, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few! Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”* (Mt 9:36-38).

In other words, he must reproduce in himself the image of the Christ of the Rogate in order to live a new Christological existence in Him and with Him, and answer to the vocation he has received.

Christ, “the absolute Rogationist”, is not only the *efficient cause*, that is, the one who calls and constitutes the being of a Rogationist. He is also the *exemplary cause*, that is, he presents himself to the Rogationist as the model to be imitated in the specific charismatic identity. This process responds to the *conformative* dimension repeatedly underlined but John Paul II in the VC: *living and expressing this by conforming one's existence to Christ* (16); *an explicit desire to be totally conformed to him* (18); *conformed to Christ, the prolongation in history of a special presence of the Risen Lord* (19).

Every time the Rogationist pronounces “Christ”, he almost instinctively adds the distinguishing element, “the Rogate”, just like the members of other Institutes add the trait of Christ that defines their charism.

It is evident, therefore, that the charism of the Rogationists and Daughters of Divine Zeal is the Christ of the Rogate. It is not so much the command of Jesus that says: *Pray...* but it is Christ who commands to pray. Our Founder did not dedicate himself to following a command but to the following of Christ, who prays, commands, and sends. The Magisterium of the Church also highlights the same. The Vatican Council II, in unequivocal terms, affirms

that *the fundamental norm of the religious life is the following of Christ, as taught by the Gospel* (PC 2). Obviously, each one will do it according to their own charism.

However, we can safely continue to say - and we also say it in these pages – that the charism of the Rogationists is the Rogate, provided that we give to this expression the objective, authentic, and effective meaning.

8. The charism is a safeguarded experience

The charism is a vital experience of supreme importance in the ecclesial point of view. It must be safeguarded as the *treasure in the field* or the *precious pearl* (Mt 13:44-45).

Father Hannibal has repeatedly affirmed strongly and richness of terms that the Rogate is truly a priceless treasure:

1. A great revelation
2. Divine Word – the great Word
3. Divine command – Command of the zeal of the Heart of Jesus
4. One of the greatest mercies
5. Word and command of Supreme importance
6. Infallible remedy – great and universal remedy
7. Secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls
8. Great treasure and precious seed

23

The command of the Christ of the “Rogate” is a word in the Gospel of Matthew and of Luke, which the apostles have heard from the voice of Jesus. This word has been read and reread since the apostolic times by the fathers of the Church, by numerous saints, and simple baptized Christians, but no one before Father Hannibal had understood in its truth and purpose that *that command of the zeal of the Heart of Jesus is the great and universal remedy, the secret of all good works and the salvation of all the souls*.

In the historic-temporal order, we can read in parallel:

- a. the mystery of the incarnation of the Word and
- b. the revelation of the Rogate.

In fact, it can be easily observed on the one hand the incalculable distance of a thousand years that transpired between the sin of Adam and the incarnation of the Word. On the other hand, the distance, evidently shorter than the previous one, but equally mysterious, between the moment in which Christ commanded the Rogate and the *historical understanding* given by the Spirit to Father Hannibal, who in his meditation on this mystery, could not but observe: as *if the Lord had placed his divine hand over it, to hide that sublime word, that divine command* (AR, 59). Father Di Francia could not hide his amazement at the omission into which the Rogate has fallen through time (cf. PS, Vol. 1, p 12).

The Rogationists cannot but fail to raise a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for the great gift of the Rogate, a mystery of love and salvation. Together with Jesus, they sing a joyful song: *I give praise to you, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will* (Mt 11:25-26).

But why particularly to St. Hannibal? In his freedom, God gives his gifts to anybody he wants to, and that gift of piercing through the divine secrets was not given to us. However, we can make an analogical hypothesis. St. Paul states: *But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman*, (Gal 4:4). That is, when God decided the incarnation of the Word, in the plan of salvation, he created Mary. St. Augustine said that Mary pleased God for her virginity, and she conceived the Word by her humility. With the virginity and humility of a woman, the time of the Incarnation of the Word were fulfilled.

It is probable that when the “fullness of time” for the “*understanding of the Rogate*” had come, God created Hannibal, the man who brought to the summit of human possibilities the virtues of purity and of humility: and in faith, the Christ of the Rogate was incarnated in Hannibal.

Where and how should the charism be safeguarded? The more precious the treasure is, the more secure the place where well-armed guardians keep it. The Founder, who had the understanding of the theological and ecclesial dimension of the Rogate, in a letter addressed to Fr. Bonicelli, writes: *After this sublime Mercy of the One “qui spirat ubi vult, et humilia respicit in Caelo et in Terra” [who blows where he wills and looks down on Heaven and Earth] I feel the duty in conscience to safeguard this divine deposit and to make it the same obligation to all my successors* (Scritti, vol. 37, p.30).

He then addressed a heartfelt and dramatic appeal to the Rogationists, lest they become unworthy of the great gift received from the Spirit.

The time has come for the Word of the Rogate to be known, that this command must be spread. The ineffable God has given this mission to us. But it will perish in our hands if we do not form ourselves in the Religious Life. What did I say? Will it perish? We will perish! It will triumph! God will snatch this precious gift from our hand and give it to others. “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits of their seasons” (Mt 21:41). Oh, my children! How can we think of the many unfortunate events and not faint in pain? Oh! Let us never make ourselves unworthy of such ineffable mercy. To be worthy of it means becoming perfect religious by the observance of the holy vows and rules. It is not enough to do promotions and Pious Unions if we do not totally belong to Jesus [...]. (Patronage of St. Joseph May 10, 1908, in Scritti, Vol. 57, p. 68)

Belonging to Jesus means allowing oneself to be possessed by Christ. Christ willingly possesses the Rogationist who takes care of his Rogate, that is to say, by living his life through the existential conformation to him, chaste, poor, and obedient; to reach that high degree of holiness that the specific charism demands. Holiness, in fact, is the strength and the power of God, who chooses fragile and weak creatures for the great missions.

9. The Charism is a deepened and constantly developed experience

We have repeatedly said that the mystery of Christ is unfathomable. To reach its depth is impossible even to the select intelligence such of those St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Precisely for this reason, we are exhorted to go forward without tiring, in all ways and by all means, in deepening the knowledge of the Rogate, especially in the biblical-theological and ecclesial dimensions. As with all the mysteries, and so also for the Rogate, we realize that it always reveals something new to the extent we want to know it better. The document MR no. 26 exhorts the Superiors should see to it that *cultural updating and specialized studies taken up by religious should deal with subjects pertinent to the distinctive nature of the Institute.*

Certainly, Father Hannibal has left a very remarkable charismatic heritage in his writings. However, the commitments, efforts, situations, and struggles that he had to sustain in order to carry on the nascent Works did not give him the conditions to elaborate a systematic treatise. It is an indispensable duty that his followers, favored by the development of the theology of the Religious Life and charisms after Vatican Council II, must feel and assume.

We can never know the Rogate enough in its intrinsic objectivity. Therefore, the Rogationist, who has chosen it as his ideal that defines and determines his entire existence, feels the need to have an absolutely correct, complete, in-depth understanding of it in all its aspects and perspectives as much as it is humanly possible.

In so far as the person consecrated to the Rogate, with the help of the Spirit, strives to understand this charism intellectually, he will also express it at the experiential level. In his life, he will generate a magnetic field toward which all his sentiments, thoughts, and actions are directed. The “Rogate-charism” will be the treasure that attracts and satisfies all the real and edifying needs of his person, according to the image-model of the Christ of the Rogate. The Rogate will be loved and relished in the commitment of the charismatic apostolate expressed with the prophetic zeal and the *caritas pastoralis* of Father Hannibal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Taken with this interest and for these purposes, the charism will create in the Rogationist a “conviction” that reaches so strongly the depths of his being so as to impose it on the intellect and draw the will and faculties to action.

25

10. Nature and structure of the founding charism

In the previous pages, we discussed the charism in general. In this chapter, we focus our attention on the nature and structure of the founding charism. The Rogationist General Chapter of 1980 (DC 94) formulated a fairly complete descriptive definition from a functional point of view.

It is the dynamic and inspiring principle that guides the religious life, spirituality, and apostolic works of the Institute, which characterizes its physiognomy and specific service. This charismatic project, which is placed as a constitutive element for the life and growth of an Institute, defines and realizes its own identity.

According to this definition, the charism is an active principle, that is, a constitutive element of the person consecrated in the religious state. It has the function of inspiring and offering the reasons, intentions, and finalities that animate and inform his being and acting. The charism, in fact, is the source of spirituality that qualifies the apostolic works of a specific Institute and defines its internal features and its own identity.

We could say that the charism creates almost a second nature. It is inscribed within the fibers of being, as if a new element were grafted in the central core of the person, in such a way that the possessor of the charismatic gift acquires a new sensibility, industriousness, efficacy, special energies, and the awareness of the demand of expressing the mission related to the gift. By virtue of this gift, the religious sees and deals with everything according to the perspective of the specific charism. This process is usually defined as “the incarnation of the charism.”⁶

Therefore, the Rogate is part of the structure of the Rogationist. It is a constitutive and essential component of the identity of the consecrated to the Rogate. It reaches the core of their being, involving their whole existence because it is ontologically and dynamically rooted in the baptismal consecration, operating in the consecrated a profound transformation, not only at the juridical, moral, and psychological level, but also and above all at the Christological level (cf. VC, 14). In fact, the Rogationist, within the context of the Church, proposes as a living memory of the way of existing and acting of the Christ of the Rogate. In short, the incarnated charism creates a special feature that characterizes the existence of the one who receives it. It seems that this is an abstract discourse, but when one thinks of the life in the Spirit, which the saints lived, that Father Hannibal has lived, the doubt ends, and amazement begins.

Seen in the perspective of the Rogate, Father Hannibal offers us a harmonious personality, which develops with an exceptional balance and manifests itself in the unity absolutely integrated by the three essential components: prayer for vocations, zeal for the diffusion of this prayer, and the apostolate of charity at the service of the least and the poor.

At the theological level, the charism is the historical realization of a reality already existing in the plan of God from eternity and entrusted to each consecrated to realize it in history.

Indeed, God did not create us in different times. Since the beginning, His was a simple, complete, definitive creation. He did not give us first the body, then the soul, then the spiritual power, then the religious vocation... and, in the end, the charism. *He has predestined us* from all eternity *to be conformed to the image of his Son* (Rom 8:29), according to the specific charismatic connotation of the Christ of the Rogate.

The person called realizes himself, according to the design of God, in an absolutely original way, both in the sense of being an unrepeatable creature - God does not repeat himself: everyone called has his face, his personal internal and external features; - and, in the sense of being called in the mind and the love of God, he is placed at the origin, at the source of his being, *at the beginning* (cf. Eph 1:4 = *from the foundation of the world*).

The Founder of the Rogationists, St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, lived this charismatic reality in an experiential way. And when the theology of the charisms did not exist at all, he was already able to make such an important truth understood by people whose level of schooling was limited. Decades before the Vatican Council II, through similarities and comparisons, he taught the current theology of the charism in all its depths, with appropriate

⁶ This analogy is quite appropriate for the understanding of the charism: that of DNA, a molecule within which is enclosed the secret of life. It brings with it the recorded genetic code, that is, the total configuration program of the individual at the physical, psychical, intellectual, operational level, etc... Analogically, the charism-molecule of the Spirit – is registered and transmitted to each member of a Religious Institute. It is the same genetic code that defines the Institute’s identity, structure, spiritual physiognomy, mission, etc.

use of terminologies, respecting the cultural levels of his followers. Let us read some profoundly autobiographical lines which underline the incarnation of the Rogate:

... They gathered, we would almost say, from the adorable lips of the Divine Master these ardent words [Rogate, ergo, etc.] that were meant to pierce into the inner core of their spirit and the innermost fiber of their heart; while they are all of the Divine Rogate, while they absorbed it as the hope of their existence in Jesus, his yearnings for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls (AR, p. 670).

That divine word forms the distinctive character of this humble Institute (AR, p. 663).

The special spirit [=spirituality] of this Institute is imbued by that word of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Rogate, etc. (AP, p. 269; Scritti, N.I., vol. 10, p. 186).

The two Institutes are born with the Rogate, in the Rogate, from the Rogate.

The three prepositions: *with, in, from* ... give the idea of the three-fold baptismal immersion, which enwraps and involves the consecrated in the trinitarian tridimensional sphere, reason, and source of the Rogate.

As we can see, the charism has a fundamental importance; from it originates the spirituality and the type of apostolate proper to a religious congregation, according to the understanding of the founder.

This is the reason why the Christ of the Rogate is the *leitmotif* of the Rogationist literature and represents the unifying center of all formative interventions. Indeed, the Christ of the Rogate is the truth of their identity, which characterizes and distinguishes them within the ecclesial community.

11. Father Hannibal historizes* the (inspiration of the) Rogate

11.1. The Holy Spirit prepares Hannibal to receive the Rogate

This command which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither it is far off.

The word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart; so that you can do it. (Dt 30: 11.14).

I have given them the words which you gave me (Jn 17: 8).

Your words were found, and I ate them; And your words became to me a joy,

And the delight of my heart, (Jer 15: 16).

In this chapter, we will make a short analysis of the second definition of the charism, which the General Chapter of 1980 offers us.

The founding charism is a gift of the Spirit, who illumines the one who receives it (=the founder), with an irresistible intervention, in such a way that he surrenders himself totally to follow Christ in the particular evangelical aspect and the specific mission reserved for him (DC 92).

* EN: The Author used the verb *storicizzare* which is literally translated as “to historize”. It means interpreting, studying, explaining a phenomenon by relating it to the precise historical period in which it occurred.

Instead of theoretical considerations, I think it is more useful to read this definition in the experience lived by Father Hannibal, the charismatic leader and model of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

The charism, the gift of the Spirit, is a mystery at the supernatural level and becomes history in the person who receives it: the founder and his followers.

Before anything else, it is good to realize how the Spirit prepares Hannibal to receive the gift of the Rogate.

Three interior movements and relational behaviors have strongly characterized Hannibal since his childhood in view of the vocational project.

1. The holiness and the life of faith;
2. The sensibility, love, and compassion for the poor;
3. The intuition of the prayer to obtain good evangelical laborers.

These three notes, together with the purity of life and with the humility in truth (cf. n. 8 above), made the soil suitable and fertile, where the Spirit planted the seed of the Rogate, to produce – and what a produce – the hundredfold.

11.1.1 The holiness of life and the life of faith

Holiness is the foundation on which the charism is built, bestowed by the Spirit for the purpose of institutionalization in the ecclesial arena. The existence of Father Hannibal is founded and develops on this essential rock. It is sufficient to underline the testimonies from which it is inferred that he preserved his baptismal innocence until the last moment of his life. His holiness was always growing, in the constant prayerful dialogue with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in the love for Mary, in the service of the least and the poor ones, in the struggles against his passions, in the corporal penance and mortification.

The holiness of life is an essential sign for the one consecrated to the Rogate. The Father was deeply convinced that without it, the goal of the charism is wasted, and the Rogationist becomes unfruitful.

Hannibal had the moral strength to pray with the pious Israelite:

And the Lord will reward me according to my justice; and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands: Because I have kept the ways of the Lord; and have not done wickedly against my God. For till his judgments are in my sight: and his justices I have not put away from me. And I shall be spotless with him: and shall keep myself from my iniquity. And the Lord will reward me according to my justice, and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes (Ps 17:21-25).

Our Founder gave full and total adherence to the invitation that Paul addressed to the Christians of Philippi: *That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, holding fast the word of life (Phil 2:15-16a).*

11.1.2. The sensibility, love, and compassion for the poor

The episode of the poor beggar who was mistreated by the companions of Hannibal in St. Nicolo's boarding school in Messina is emblematic. Hannibal was just about seven years of age at that time when he gave something to the beggar and lovingly comforted and

kissed him. It was not the only episode that showed his tender love for the poor. His mother said that he needs to be watched over always because he would give everything to the poor. To a woman who knocks and asks for alms, he gave two silver coins he got as a gift from his aunt Luisa. He brings a gatekeeper into their house to shelter from the cold and rain (cf. AP, p. 492).

11.1.2. The intuition of the prayer to obtain good laborers

At the time of our Founder, there was no lack of devotional books that offer to the faithful an abundant choice of prayers for all occasions, needs, and circumstances. While still an adolescent, Hannibal was astonished, felt sorry, and could not understand how prayers were made for rain, for a good harvest, for the liberation from divine punishment, and for a hundred of other needs, but could not find even one prayer to obtain priests. Clearly, Hannibal already understood the value and, therefore, the necessity for priests for the salvation of souls.

11.2. The Holy Spirit enlightens and guides Hannibal

This is how Hannibal Di Francia speaks of himself in the third person:

The Lord, in his infinite, gracious goodness, enlightened him about a great word of the Gospel, which contains the secret of the salvation of the Church and the society (AP, p 109).

A young man, at the beginning of his spiritual life and when still knew nothing about those divine words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam," recorded in the Holy Gospel, had this predominant thought in his mind: to do greater good in the Holy Church, to save many souls, to extend the kingdom of God on earth, there is no other means more certain than the increase of chosen ministers of God, of holy, apostolic men, according to the Heart of Jesus. Therefore, the best and effective prayer to be preferred would be to ask unceasingly the Most Holy Heart of Jesus that he may send on earth holy men and chosen priests, as in the times of St. Dominic and St. Francis, as in the times of St. Ignatius, as in the days of St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus and the likes. This idea seemed very clear and indisputable (AP, p. 110).

There was someone who paid attention to this divine command, even before he had read it in the Gospel, and started the journey of his life with this attention (AP, p. 110).

*Such attention was a divine inspiration that came to him at the beginning of his tender age: it was a great, sublime idea that came from the Spirit, that blows where it wills. It seems that the Spirit itself breathed on him at the beginning of his spiritual youth, many years before he started the Pious Work (AP, p.110).**

We have the testimonies of Fr. Vitale and Fr. Tusino, who, though differing about the time (= of the event of the inspiration of the charism), both affirm that *he heard an inner voice*

* EN: There is a play of words in the Italian original *ispirare* (inspire) and *spirare* (blow, breath). *Tale attenzione fu una ispirazione divina, che lo prevenne nello sboccio dei giovani anni: fu un'idea grande, sublime, che lo Spirito, il quale spira dove vuole, pare abbia spirato. Egli stesso...*

telling him to become an apostle and propagator of the Rogate. “An inner voice”: obviously, the voice of the Spirit that decisively and strongly resounded in his conscience and directed his existence, totally encompassing it in the commitment to live and propagate the Rogate.

At this point, we need to take note a very important and decisive fact regarding the authenticity of a founding and institutional charism. The documents of the Magisterium of the Church, in order to ascertain their authenticity and guarantee, require some characteristic notes (cf. no. 4, e above). The first and the most essential is its *unique origin from the Spirit*.

Father Hannibal wanted to have the objective certainty that his was indeed a divine inspiration, and he asked and eagerly awaited the ecclesiastical approval, to have the confirmation that everything truly came and proceeded from on high. To the Visitation Sisters he wrote (1919): *That Divine Spirit, that blows where it wills [“Spiritus spirat ubi vult”], seems to me to have given the initial impulse of starting, for several years now and with due permission from the Ecclesiastical Authority, a Pious Work for the interests of the Heart of Jesus.*

The citations reported in this paragraph outline the synthesis of the pneumatological origin of the Rogate, which we find exactly in the vocation of Father Hannibal. The *iter* of the Founder develops essentially on the line of an intense and special experience of the Spirit, as he affirmed several times when confiding to his first followers. We can also read this in his writings, which highlight in decidedly uncontestable terms that the Rogate is a charism coming from the Spirit.

11.3. The Rogate, initially, was a divine inspiration

30

From the words of Father Di Francia, one can draw in absolutely clear, precise and unequivocal terms that initially, specifically during the prayerful ecstasy at the Church of St. John of Malta (Church of St. John of Malta), he had a

- *divine inspiration* (AP, p. 110); the Spirit furthermore
- *gave him the enlightenment on the great word of the Gospel* (AP, p. 109).

Father Hannibal had not yet read the *logion* of the Rogationist charism in the Gospel. What he had at the Church of St. John of Malta was an intellectual knowledge that the Spirit gave him neither with words, nor with a dreams, nor with apparitions, nor with any other external sign, but with a true and proper intellectual illumination (*he gave him enlightenment*). It was a *divine inspiration*, according to the teaching of St. Paul: *God has revealed to us through the Spirit* (1 Cor 2:10). We can rightly say that our charism is the *intelligence (= understanding) of the Rogate*.*

11.4. The Rogate, afterward, was a gospel revelation

When Father Hannibal read the pericope of the Rogate in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, he was surprised. Claiming with a deep conviction that it was a revelation, he writes:

The young man remained surprised and absorbed when reading

* EN: *Divine intelligence* or *divine understanding* is brought about by the Holy Spirit’s gift of intelligence. It is not a fruit of human intelligence and reasoning. As noted earlier, this English edition translates it as *understanding of the Rogate*.

those words of the holy Gospel: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few: pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he may send out laborers into his harvest.”

These two passages of the Holy Gospels [Mt 9:37-38; Lk 10:2] form a great revelation (PPA, 1919).

It is not surprising if the Founder, in the same writing, would speak either of *inspiration* or *revelation*. He wrote this about thirty years after the event. In the PPA, he certainly does not intend to make the chronology of historical events nor a theological analysis of the same events: therefore, due to the strict connection of the two moments, he reduces the two manifestations into a unity.

However, *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* certainly gave the Founder *a spirit of wisdom and of revelation of the knowledge of him* (Eph 1:17-18) of the charism of the Rogate.

In fact, Father Hannibal is deeply convinced that the divine inspiration, which he initially had in the Church of St. John of Malta, seemed to him *very clear and indisputable*; however, he had the confirmation, guarantee, and absolute certainty after reading the *logion* in the Gospel: that reading was hearing of Christ's own voice.⁷

John Paul II, in the “Bull of Canonization,” has synthesized what we have said in this section:

At a very young age, while in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, he had the enlightenment, which we can define as the “understanding of the Rogate.” He discovered the primacy of prayer to obtain vocations, which became his charism and the purpose of his life. Afterward, he read the passage from the Gospel: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few: pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in his harvest. (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). In this way, he understood the Rogate, not as a simple exhortation but an “explicit command” of Jesus and, therefore, an “infallible remedy” for the good of the Church and of the society.

Let us recall some citations from which we observe the surprise, the painful astonishment of Father Hannibal, and the highest value of the Rogate in the plan of salvation.

That word was there in the book of the Holy Gospel, recorded by two evangelists. Thousands of Religious Orders and Congregations have devoutly scrutinized that divine book, taking as the norm of their institutions either one or other verses, passages, sentences, commands, and counsels. But as if Our Lord Jesus had placed his divine hand over it to hide that sublime word, that divine command. No one noticed it until the adorable Redeemer uncovered it to the most miserable among his creatures. He pointed it out, introduced it to your ears, imprinted it on your hearts, melted it in your lips, and placed it in your breasts together with his wounded and burning Heart (Speech for the religious investiture of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, St. Joseph 1908, In Scritti, vol. 45, 384).

The peoples did not pay attention to this divine command and have neglected it completely (Scritti, vol. 3, p. 39).

⁷ As regards, the voice of Christ, probably the words of our *logion* are *ipsissima verba Christi*, that is the exact word pronounced by Jesus, not only for the objective soteriological importance but also for the fact that both the evangelists recorded it with absolutely the same wordings.

Unfortunately, it is a painful mystery that no one paid attention to that word (Scritti, vol. 3, p. 42).

It has remained a secret that we can say hidden because no one has ever given serious attention to it. [...] For twenty centuries – this is the truth – the great word which is more or less an explicit and repeated command of Our Lord Jesus Christ, remained almost buried and unnoticed in the pages itself of the Holy Gospel (AP, p. 133).

That word of Jesus Christ is a command of the zeal of his divine Heart, a word and a command of greatest value, indeed, an infallible remedy for the salvation of the Church and the society. The Rogate contains the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls (AP, p.115).

[...] nobody should be surprised if Satan sees, as a consequence of the propagation of this divine prayer, the beginning of the destruction of his kingdom (AP, p. 115).

12. Date and place of the first inspiration

But what is the date and place where the Founder received first “divine inspiration”? When did this predominant thought flashed in his mind?

Fr. Francesco Vitale, Fr. Teodoro Tusino, and Fr. Serafino Santoro were the most qualified testimonies because they lived with the Founder in intimate communion since the beginning of the Congregation. All of them agreed that the event happened when Father Hannibal was about seventeen years of age.

Fr. Tusino, the first and the most accredited historian and bibliographer of our Founder, testified in this way:

[...] though God has not yet made known his voice to Hannibal, nonetheless, he already had the best condition to listen to it and follow it when it spoke to him: His heart was always raised on high and the thought of God was always dominant in him. He intensified his prayer and fortified his spiritual life. He increased the frequency of his visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, particularly when exposed in the Forty Hours. He grew in his love of solitude and recollection. He completely avoided the rare occasion of going to the theater, and he forever renounced the short hunting games with his relatives (MB I, p. 121).

Furthermore:

He has the pious habit of visiting the Blessed Sacrament exposed for the Forty Hours every day in different churches of the city (AP, p. 11).

From this testimony, we clearly see that Hannibal collaborated *with* and offered *to the* Spirit the best possible availability he had. The natural attitude went always purified, amplified, and sublimated. A kind of permanent spiritual metabolism can be observed in him. Fr. Tusino added:

The Father often told us that the first idea of the Rogate, i.e., the prayer to

obtain priests for the Holy Church, although not knowing yet the Gospel passage that commands it, flashed in his mind while praying during the Forty Hours before the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of St. John of Malta when he was still a lay young man (MB I, p, 121).

The expression *the Father often told us* (=ci diceva) in imperfect tense indicates a continuing action for which we suppose that it was not a secret said only once but many times and not only to one of his followers and collaborators but to many ('us'). Therefore, the Spirit, that leads the young Hannibal (without knowing yet the Gospel *logion*) to go in a Eucharistic pilgrimage to various churches where Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for Forty Hours, stopped him at a certain point, at the CSGM, for the special *infusion* of the gift of the Rogate.

It was the charismatic Pentecost: the descent of the Holy Spirit onto Hannibal, a young lover of the Eucharistic, in a Eucharistic ambiance, in a Eucharistic moment. In the Church of St. John of Malta, Hannibal receives the understanding of the charism, and the Rogate begins to dwell in his life as a permanent grace.

Obviously, Father Hannibal did not yet have the immediate and total understanding of the charism, whether of the founder or that of foundation. Various situations and historical mediations gave him the complete knowledge and the possibility of realizing it in the Church and for the Church, as reported in his biography and the history of the Congregation.

Let us focus our attention on the Church of St. John of Malta:⁸ in this church, Father Hannibal had *the first idea of the Rogate*. In this church, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament implanted the seed of his divine Rogate in the mind and heart of the Founder. Afterwards, through his ministry and his mediation, *the Divine Farmer [...] came [in the Avignone Quarter] to cultivate himself his small plant, which is buried in the soil of pain and mortification, where the seed of his divine Rogate was enclosed* (*Regulations for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus*, Taormina, December 15, 1920).

The seed contains the embryo of the future plant, the organism at the first stage of its growth, as well as the vital energy and the potentiality of the fully-grown tree in the future. Therefore, we can say that:

1. The Church of St. John of Malta is the place of our *origin*, of our *charismatic conception*.
2. In the historical journey of our charism, the Church of St. John of Malta represents the *departure area*, while the Avignone Quarter is the first stage of its development.
3. The *river* of the Rogate, which has its beginning in Church of St. John of Malta, after having bathed and purified the Avignone Quarter, has now reached the five continents.
4. The Church of St. John of Malta is the Horeb of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, where Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament told our "Moses": *I have seen the misery of my people in the Avignone Quarter...I know their suffering...Now, go! I command you...*
5. The *original reason* for which our Institute can claim to be a Eucharistic is in the Church of St. John of Malta.
6. Precisely, because Father Hannibal had the *first idea* of the Rogate in the Church of St. John of Malta, during a prayerful ecstasy before Jesus in the

Blessed Sacrament, we find in this church the root of the feast of July 1st, i.e., of Jesus who came in the hovels of Avignone Quarter as *a King in the midst his people, as a Good Shepherd in the midst his fold, as a Loving Father, Divine Farmer*. But *where* did he come from? He came from Church of St. John of Malta.

The Church of St. John of Malta is the place of the genesis of the Family of the Rogate, which includes those who are consecrated with vows to the Rogate: Rogationists, Daughters of Divine Zeal, Missionaries of the Rogate; the Sacred Alliance, all the members of the Pious Union of the Evangelical Rogation (UPV), the Rogationist lay Associations, to whichever group they belong, all the expressions of Rogationist apostolate in the double dimension: Prayer and Charity.

The Church of St. John of Malta cannot just remain in the remote history, but it must assume its rightful value in the present living memory of the Rogationists, in the same way as that of the Avignone Quarter. The Church of St. John of Malta deserves the first place in the priority of values, both in the geographical and, above all, in the charismatic levels.⁸

13. From the Church to St. John of Malta to the Avignone Quarter

34

⁸ The CSJM was built circa VI century, as per tradition, by St. Placid, who was sent by St. Benedict to Sicily. It was destroyed together with Benedictine Monastery in 541 by the barbarians who killed St. Placid together with fellow monks. After this barbaric attack, the Benedictines reconstructed the church and the monastery which was devastated once again by the Saracens. In the year 1099, the church and the monastery were restored by Ruggero the Norman, but it was ceded to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. In 1588, the work of restoration started in view of making it a cemetery where the holy martyrs are buried. The earthquake of 1908 destroyed the entire central nave of the church. Only the apse remained from the big church which used to have a surface area of more than 1,700 square meters. After the Second World War, it was restored by the municipal administration.

For all the reasons enumerated above, it would be desirable that, with whatever juridical title, the Rogationists should come into possession of the CSJM, to make it a place of perpetual adoration for vocations.

The ecclesial moment is exceedingly favorable.

On December 8, 2007, the prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, Claudio Card. Hummes, sent a letter to the Bishops, wherein among others, he suggests to *bring about a connection between perpetual Eucharistic adoration for the sanctification of priests and the initiation of a commitment on the part of consecrated feminine souls – following the typology of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Eternal High Priest, and Helper in his work of Redemption – who might wish to spiritually adopt priests in order to help them with their self-offering, prayer, and penance [...] We are asking, therefore, all diocesan Ordinaries who apprehend in a particular way the specificity and irreplaceability of the ordained ministry in the life of the Church, together with the urgency of a common action in support of the ministerial priesthood, to take an active role and promote – in the different portions of the People of God entrusted to them, – true and proper cenacles in which clerics, religious and lay people – united among themselves in the spirit of true communion – may devote themselves to prayer, in the form of continuous Eucharistic adoration in a spirit of genuine and authentic reparation and purification.*

Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (67), writes: *Here, I would like to express appreciation and support for all those Institutes of Consecrated Life whose members dedicate a significant amount of time to eucharistic adoration. In this way, they give us an example of lives shaped by the Lord's real presence. I would also like to encourage those associations of the faithful and confraternities specifically devoted to eucharistic adoration; they serve as a leaven of contemplation for the whole Church and a summons to individuals and communities to place Christ at the center of their lives.*

The charism of the Rogate entered the history of the Congregation in two moments and two different places. We already have described the

- *1st Moment*: 1868. The Spirit led Hannibal to the Blessed Sacrament exposed for the Forty Hours in Church of St. John of Malta in Messina. Here, our Founder, who was still a young layman, received the understanding of the charism and conceived the Rogate in his mind and his heart. Here starts his spousal adventure with the Christ of the Rogate.

- *2nd Moment*: 1877. The Spirit – through Zancone – led Hannibal, who was already a deacon at that time, to the Avignone Quarter. He showed him the abandoned crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. They were the poor and the little ones, reduced to a life without joy and hope,⁹

In the Avignone Quarter, the Rogate is born: nine years passed from conception (1868) to birth (1877). A historical journey, which we could ideally configure as a bridge that lies on two pillars. The first is the Church of St. John of Malta, and the second is the Avignone Quarter. This bridge eliminates the distance and unites the two pillars (which symbolize the two dimensions of the Rogate: *oratio* and *actio*) in the essential charismatic unity.

In fact, in the Church of St. John of Malta, the Spirit entrusted to Hannibal the prayer to obtain laborers for the abandoned crowds. In the Avignone Quarter, the same Spirit entrusted to him the abandoned crowds.

In the Avignone Quarter, the evangelical scene is repeated: the vision of the crowds, the cry of the Rogate, the answer to the command of the Lord. In the Avignone Quarter, we have the first actualization of the two dimensions of the Rogate: the prayer for vocations and the works of charity in favor of the little ones and the poor. Here, the little ones and the poor, the *object* of charity (Hannibal, like Christ, teaches, preaches, and cures) become the *subject* of the prayer commanded by Christ. The little ones and the poor become the first praying community, the first choir ever of the Evangelical Rogation.

The Avignone Quarter is not only the space that receives the expressions and the operational dimensions of the charitable works but also the point of irradiation to the Universal Church of the prayer commanded by Jesus. The poor of the Avignone Quarter are the forebears of the Rogationists; they were the first Rogationist laity, who, catechized by Father Hannibal, perceived and obeyed the command of the Lord.

^{7 9} Avignone Quarter, where no one dared to set foot, became a citadel of Father Hannibal, the object of his compassion, the launching pad of the Rogate and his pastoral ministry for vocations. Father Hannibal writes: *I was still a deacon when, by chance, I happened to enter the Avignone Quarter, which became a disgrace for the entire city. I was struck by the sight of so much misery and neglect: illegitimate unions, children immersed in the mud, girls exposed to (=moral) danger, older people dying on bare and damp ground. [...] it was a moment that recalls the passage of the Gospel: those crowds were like sheep without a shepherd* (PPA, 1901).

The condition of the roads in that slum area is very pitiful, particularly during winter, when they form large puddles due to the lack of drainage and rotting garbage and trashes of every kind [...]. Those miserable people lived amid rags and rubbish everywhere, where most disgusting insects swarm, so much so that an older man died there, devoured (= by insects); and this is not an exaggeration. [...] More miserable was the moral condition of those poor souls, composed of a hundred people, around 30 to 40 families without civil and religious bonds. It is easy to understand: in such a condition of material and spiritual deprivation, without the light from the Christian morals, without the decorum of civility, what could that place be, if not the reign of vice? (MB I, p. 335ff)

In the PPA of 1919, the Father writes in the third person: *He realizes that there could be no other better place than this to do a little of charity out of pure love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme Good.*

The Founder, speaking in the third person, says:

He started the pious charitable works in those enclosed shanties with the principal plan of obeying more perfectly and religiously that divine command of the divine zeal of the Heart of Jesus: Rogate... It was too beautiful to see that the Evangelical Rogation to obtain good laborers for the Church resounds now in the tender voices of the children of the poor (PPA, 1901).

This is how it pleased the Divine Mercy, who gazes at the little things in heaven and on earth (Ps 112:6), to entrust such a great treasure to this Pious Work of the little poor and orphans [...]. This spirit of prayer soon became the spirit of this Pious Work, which forms its character, goal, and action (PPA, 1901).

We cannot but agree that if Church of St. John of Malta is the place of our origin and conception, the Avignone Quarter is the place of our integral charismatic birth.

We can conclude by affirming that the Church of St. John of Malta and the Avignone Quarter are two complementary points of the charismatic geography of the Rogationists, for the comprehension of the mystery of our charism and the ecclesial service of the same mystery.

Card. Ratzinger, in a homily delivered in the Rogationist Parish Church, in Piazzzi Asti in Rome on January 27, 2002, shared to us an original vision of Father Hannibal, within the context of the Avignone Quarter.

It is here that our Blessed was struck by the vocation, for which he became aware that he has to enter into that world, that he has to get out of his previous condition, that he has to repeat the exodus of Jesus, the exodus of his vocation: to enter into that misery to bring a little of light [...]. Blessed Hannibal, touched by the cry of Jesus "Rogate" – pray so that the Lord may send out laborers, to help these little ones who had no shepherd – joins the cry of the Lord and cries out to us even today: Rogate, pray. But this entering into the cry of Jesus cannot be understood only as a simple word, but a word that works, that transforms the whole life. Father Hannibal prayed with his entire life, making himself a laborer of the harvest of Jesus, taking part in the work of redemption, of salvation.

36

Struck by the vocation. In the Avignone Quarter, Father Hannibal understood that his vocation was not only to raise his eyes above, offering the Lord the prayer for good laborers, which has already evidently become part of his existence, and afterward he would hear resounding into his ears as the cry of Christ who commanded the Rogate.

Card. Ratzinger affirms that in the Avignone Quarter, our Founder understood that he must *enter into the cry of the Lord*. But this time, the Lord cries with the voice of the poor with whom he identifies himself. *Entering into the cry of the Lord* means in that world, *entering into that misery to bring there a little light* to collaborate with Christ by *taking part in the work of redemption, of salvation*.

That cry of the Lord was a resounding vibration that created, for Father Di Francia and his followers, a new world, a new *habitat*: the "promised land," which is free from evil and the intrusion of sin. This became a garden of bliss and the cenacle where *it was too beautiful to see that the Evangelical Rogation to obtain good laborers for the Church resounds now in the tender voices of the children of the poor*.

As soon as Father Hannibal had the financial possibility, he bought those "hovels," one after another. But before doing that, he first conquered the hearts of the poor inhabitants of the

slums and prepared them to receive Jesus, who would come from Church of St. John of Malta.

We might ask ourselves what effect the lightning that struck Hannibal with sudden and intense enlightenment of mind produced in him. We can read the answer to this in his auto-eulogy: *For the Rogate, we say nothing: he dedicated himself to it, either out of zeal or by fixation, or both* (Scritti, N.I., vol. 7, p. 241). The lightning has produced in him a *fixation*, which the Founder, in his humility, wants to call it an obsession. We give a very different interpretation to it, which corresponds to the historical and personal truth of the Founder.

In analogy with the chemical phenomenon that occurs in the photographic technique, the light rays of the lightning produce on the sensitive support, which is his heart, a profound and indelible *fixation* on the word of the Rogate. We cannot help but bring out an autobiographical citation:

They gathered, we would almost say, from the adorable lips of the Divine Master these ardent words [Rogate, ergo, etc.] that were meant to pierce into the inner core of their spirit and the innermost fiber of their heart; while they are all of the Divine Rogate, while they absorbed it as the hope of their existence in Jesus, his yearnings for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls (AP, p. 670).

Words which are the perfect echo of what we read from the Deuteronomy: *For this command which I command you this day is not too hard for you neither is it far off... But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it* (Dt 30:11,14).

Hannibal receives and welcomes the Word from the Spirit of Christ: *for I have given them the words you have given me* (Jn 17:8) *and he ate them* (Jer 15:16)

Zeal is born and is motivated by fixation and generates in our Founder the exceptional apostolic activity full of stupendous initiatives.

Cardinal Ratzinger said that the Founder *cries out to us even today: Rogate*. Obviously, the prayer commanded by Jesus, through the voice of Father Hannibal, i.e., through his teachings and his example, has to involve the whole life of the Rogationists in the three dimensions of the specific consecration, in an original and existential way. Our Founder is the model, in whom “the Rogate universe” occupies all the spaces of the intelligence, conscience, soul, life, prospects, plans.

The Rogate is the central nucleus that connotes and defines the traits of his unrepeatable and unmistakable spiritual-charismatic features. It is on the foundation of his religious and apostolic experience, and characterizes his being and acting, as a believer, priest, and founder, as a poet and beggar, writer, educator, an apostle of the prayer for vocations, and father of the orphans and the poor.¹⁰

It is common knowledge in what terms and to what extent Father Hannibal had incarnated the Rogate. We can demonstrate this from the Forty Declarations and his parallel autobiographical writings. Fr. Tusino says: *The Rogate was the light on his path, the star of his thought, the sun of his life. He was born for that!* (AP, p. 106).

We can add other notes that emerge from his life, writings, and biographies:

- a) Full awareness
- b) Intuitive conscience

¹⁰ Cf. G. Ciranni, *Accolse il “Rogate” evangelico nella sua totalità radicale*, in “L’Osservatore Romano, 23 aprile 1983.

- c) Creative, dynamic interpretation
- d) Total availability
- e) Specific and all-encompassing mission of his life
- f) Law of his existence
- g) Logic of his consecration
- h) Meaning and reason for his life and apostolate
- i) Strength superior to his own, to which he could not deny his unconditional obedience
- j) The way being of his ideal self

Alone, notwithstanding all the terrible struggles and the bitter persecutions (that could have forced anyone else to paralysis), he launched his creative fantasy beyond all horizons and achieved an incalculable volume of good in the charismatic field of the Rogate.

We can affirm that Father Hannibal is the maximum possible re-presentation of the “Christ of the Rogate.”

14. The Priestly-Religious Vocation

38

The most natural wave carrier of the Rogate is no other than the priesthood. In fact, the Rogate is the command that the Lord Jesus gave primarily to the Apostles and their successors. It has as its finality to ask from the Lord of the harvest for good laborers, in particular, the priests to whom Christ has entrusted his powers, his Eucharistic Body, and his ecclesial Body.

The precise date when the young Hannibal heard the voice of the Lord calling him to share in His priesthood as well as the date on which he received the charism of the Rogate from the Spirit is unfortunately unknown to us. We have to content ourselves with approximations. Fr. Francesco Vitale, the first successor and biographer of our Founder, puts it towards the end of 1868, in the same year and place in which Father Hannibal had the understanding of the Rogate at the Church of St. John of Malta (cf. F.B. Vitale, *Canon Hannibal Maria Di Francia his Life and Works*, p. 36). Fr. Tusino affirms and records that it happened in October of 1869, after reading the life of St. John Berchmans, who had a significant influence on Hannibal, that he even decided to become a Jesuit. He writes in MB I, p. 124: *It is, therefore, to be believed that Hannibal had a sudden and certain vocation in October 1869, and it was not only a vocation to priesthood but also to religious life.*

Ultimately, Fr. Vitale seems to hold that Hannibal received the Rogationist vocation and the priestly-religious vocation in a single historical moment, that is, precisely what he experienced in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in CSGM. Fr. Tusino puts in two dates the Rogationist vocation and that of priestly-religious vocation, which are about a year apart.

Through a critical analysis of the life of Father Hannibal, of his writings and the testimonies, the scholars will probably be able to determine with precision the two dates.

The historical uncertainties are of relative importance to us today. One thing is sure, theologically, the vocation of Father Hannibal – is one of a kind, uniquely Rogationist-priestly-

religious vocation. If we eliminate even just one of these three essential components, we will lose the authentic and original vocation of our Founder. The constitutive elements of the vocation merge into a single existential reality, not only in the dimension of being but also in the dimension of acting. *In the priest, in fact, the vocation to the priesthood and the vocation to the consecrated life converge in a profound and dynamic unity* (VC, 30).

So, regardless of “the time in which”, we are interested in the “how”, i.e., to the “vocational path”, which we find in the testimonies of Fr. Vitale and Fr. Tusino.

Let us start with that of Fr. Vitale (*Canon Hannibal Maria Di Francia, his life and works*, p. 36):

One night, while praying, he felt strong impulses in his heart to consecrate himself to the Lord, to immolate himself to him and not to indulge himself in worldly affairs. When daybreak came, he rushed to the Church where the most Divine was exposed for Forty Hours, and he had to repeat this to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. “Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus” [Speak Lord, your servant is listening]. And he listened inwardly to that voice and had such a brilliant light in his mind, a fire burning in his heart, that he himself did not know, or perhaps, did not want to express that experience.

Such words offer us a splendid witness, richly articulated but complex and difficult to interpret in all its depth and scope. The reason is that in the citation, the presupposed dates of both Fr. Vitale and Fr. Tusino conflict. According to Fr. Tusino, if the church referred to is that of St. John of Malta, Hannibal was not yet thinking on that day of *consecrating himself totally to the Lord, and the voice, the light, and the burning fire* are exclusively referred to the understanding of the Rogate.

However, we can equally make reflections on the brilliant testimony of Fr. Vitale, which allows us to approach the vocation of Father Hannibal vis a vis some vocations in the Bible.

- *One night...*

One night, while a deep silence held all things captive, just as on the night of liberation from the slavery of Egypt (cf. Ex 11:4) the mighty word from heaven, from the royal throne (cf. Wis 18:14) was addressed to Hannibal, to bring it to the people who await the liberation of Christ, the only Savior of the world, through the collaboration of Good Laborers to be obtained with the Evangelical Rogation.

One night, as in the night of salvation that we celebrate at Easter Vigil. The salvation done by Christ that would be prolonged for centuries through the Rogate, *which contains the secret of the salvation of the church and the society* (AP, p. 109).

One night, the night of betrayal, (cf. 1 Cor 11:23) during which Jesus, before surrendering himself to his executioners, gave himself to the disciples in the sacrament of love, which have been made present from generation to generation through the ministry of the priests.

One night, the night of the calling of Samuel, with the difference that the vocational dialogue happened while Samuel was asleep and proceeded intermittently to the listening to the voice that wakes him up. Instead, Hannibal was awake and felt *strong impulses in his heart* in prayerful dialogue with the Lord.

We will find other significant details when we read in parallel the vocation of Samuel and that of Father Hannibal. In both, the first religious formation has been given by their respective mothers, then followed up, in the case of Samuel, in the temple under the care of a

priest, Eli, while that of Hannibal, in St. Nicolo's boarding-school, under the guidance of Fr. Foti.

The dynamics of the two vocations are identical and unique. In fact, especially in the biblical vocations in the Old Testament, the scheme of the biblical vocations usually develops in four moments: *calling, objection, request for a sign, acceptance* on the part of the one called. (cf. the vocation of Moses, the prophets, and also of Mary). In Samuel and Hannibal, there was no objection, and there was no attempt of "escape", but they accept the word with the docility of a little child who does not pose any resistance.

- ...while praying...

It is God who elaborates the vocational plan; it is he who, in a prayerful dialogue, makes the recipient understand the nature, its corresponding mission, the essential ways that should distinguish his way of life in history and the Church.

The *strong impulses* troubled Hannibal because he was not yet aware of the plan of the Lord in a perfectly clear manner. After having felt the *strong impulses*, he could not wait for the day to come, and perhaps he wanted to awaken the dawn (cf. Ps 56:9). In fact,

- ...when daybreak came, he rushed...

to the church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed to offer, like Samuel, his unconditional availability: *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus*. Here the Founder had the certainty of the vocation in its totality. The Lord spoke and Hannibal *listened to the voice in his heart, and had so brilliant a light in his mind, a fire burning in his heart*. The brilliant light is in tune with the definition of the charism of the 1980 Chapter, reported above (cf. above, in 11), where it affirmed that the charism *enlightens with irresistible intervention the one who receives it*.

40

Let us go back to the vigil of Hannibal (*while praying*). Certainly, that was not his only nocturnal prayer. The gift of prayer that the Spirit has granted to the Father Di Francia is truly exceptional in a manner that we can hardly find in other saints. If he suffered for the lack of prayers to obtain priests, we cannot doubt that in that night, he prayed for the intention that has always fueled the restlessness of his heart: to obtain holy priests. The Lord heard his prayers and sent Hannibal himself to and for the universal Church; he was the chosen, virtuous priest, with wisdom and natural intelligence. This profile corresponds exactly to that one sketched by Father Di Francia in the stupendous prayer he raised to the Lord to obtain a holy priest for Messina (cf. *Scritti*, vol. 1, p. 47).

In the attempt to compare the vocation of our Founder to those in the Bible, let us examine the testimony which Fr. Tusino writes in the MB I, p. 124: *Let us remember that the vocation of the Father "was not ordinary," as the Father told us and as Fr. Vitale underlines*.

Fr. Tusino himself, in the biography *He Never Said No*, recalls to us the following revelation that the Father told him:

My vocation had three characteristics:

1) First of all, it was sudden. Although I liked a pious life, in those days when masonry and liberalism were dominant, I was not thinking of becoming a priest. Unexpectedly, the Lord sent me His light.

2) It was irresistible. I felt that I could not escape from the power of grace. I had absolutely to surrender.

3) *It was very certain. After that light, I was absolutely sure that God was calling me. I could not entertain the least doubt that the Lord wanted me to follow that way.*”

The three qualities are similar to those we find in the vocation of Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and in the New Testament, that of the disciples, above all, of Paul whom Jesus calls to follow him. Both in Paul and Hannibal, the calling is *sudden*.

Both heard the voice, Paul from the outside, Hannibal from within.

Both were enveloped in the light; that of Paul enlightens and blinds, while that of Hannibal enlightens with sweetness.

Both have the certainty that Christ calls them, and neither resisted the calling. While keeping full freedom, they felt an inner strength so powerful and fascinating that they cannot help but follow Christ who is calling them.

15. The Christ of the Rogate in the Gospels

We have already said that Jesus Christ is the ultimate Rogationist (cf. Ch. 7 above). Father Hannibal and his religious are Rogationists by participation. We have also said that the charism of the Rogationists is indisputably the Christ of the Rogate, re-presented and lived in the ecclesial community.

Since the Christ of the Rogate for the Rogationists is an efficient cause (that is, *he brought the Rogationist to existence*) and at the same time an exemplary cause (*model of the Rogationist*), to conform their life to him, it is necessary that “those called to the Rogate” have, as much as possible, a rigorously exact knowledge of his person and his mission. In this chapter, we will sufficiently focus our attention and reflection on the Christ of the Rogate as it is presented to us by the evangelists.

To achieve this objective, we need to go to the evangelical contexts where Jesus shows himself in the particular aspect that responds to the charismatic identity that the Holy Spirit gave to Father Hannibal.

We know well that the place of the identification of the Christ of the Rogate is found in Matthew:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Mt 9:35- 38).

And in Luke:

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk

10:1-2).

They are passages that resonate in the *Writings* of our Founder and the Rogationist literature with the dominant frequency and rhythm of a symphony. In them, we find the traits that synthesize the image of the Christ of the Rogate, the habitat, the charismatic area of the Rogationists, the evangelical genesis, and as well as the epiphany of being Rogationists.

The synthesis of the image that expands in evangelical contexts, where our passages are inserted or recalled, through feelings, attitudes, and apostolate of Jesus Christ. We can also say that, for the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, these two passages represent the high point of the Gospel, from which they observe all the moments and movements of Jesus; better still, they are the beacon that projects intense rays of light on his person and activity.

The first place we have to visit is the synagogue in Nazareth; here we find Jesus, who reads Isaiah 61:1-2:

And there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:17-21).

I believe that we do not force the text if we define this quote as "prophecy of the Rogate," considering the Rogate as the Word that Jesus Christ received from the Father and that Jesus Christ himself prayed and lived (cf. 23.5; 29.10 below). Isaiah's passage is strictly connected with the passage of Saint Matthew, where we find *poor, blind, oppressed*, who constitute the *exhausted and abandoned crowds* of whom Jesus Christ has compassion.

42

In Isaiah, the crowds await the liberator; in Luke, "today", the crowds are set free by Jesus Christ, who officially proclaims in the synagogue of Nazareth the mission received from the heavenly Father and presents himself as the one who was consecrated with the anointing and sent out precisely to announce deliverance and salvation. Jesus Christ is aware of being the "consecrated and sent by the Father": this is his being; in fact, he defines himself thus when, in controversy with his listeners, he declares himself as he *whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world* (Jn 10:36; cf. Acts 10:37-38).¹¹

Before reflecting on the fundamental *logion* of our charism, I think it is necessary to consider the mystery of consecration for two reasons:

1. The Rogationist is "consecrated" and "sent" like every other religious by virtue of the profession of the evangelical counsels, and he is even more so if, to the religious state is united with the clerical state with the sacrament of Order. Therefore, as such, he has the essential duty to configure himself to Jesus Christ: the Consecrated One par excellence and the Apostle of the Father (cf. VC, 9), the supreme consecrated and missionary of the Father for his Kingdom (cf. VC, 22).
2. A second reason is proposed by our holy Founder, who affirms with extreme clarity that the specific apostolate of the Rogationist consists in *ut mittat* prayer, so that the

¹¹ The expression *has been sent* was referred to Jesus in the Gospels 46 times: once in Matthew, once in Mark, four times in Luke, and 40 times in John.

Lord of the harvest may call and send the collaborators of Jesus Christ to the work of salvation (cf. no. 22 below).

15.1. The mystery of consecration

The heavenly Father, who consecrated Jesus Christ, makes us share in the consecration of his Son; in him and like him, we too are consecrated with the anointing for the kingdom.

Saint Irenaeus affirms: *The Spirit of God descended upon Jesus and anointed him, [...] so that we, receiving from the abundance of his anointing, might be saved* (Irenaeus, Adv. Her. III, 9, 3).

God, the Father, who in baptism placed his seal on Jesus Christ (*for on him has God the Father set his seal* [Jn 6:27]) will also put it on us. Saint Paul affirms: *But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee* (2 Cor 1:21-22).

The anointing and seal of the Spirit of which Paul speaks allude to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation that all Christians receive (cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 5:5).

However, baptismal consecration does not exclude other considerations. Those who are called with a particular vocation and mission receive from God a subsequent consecration. John Paul II writes:

Everyone in the Church is consecrated in Baptism and Confirmation, but the ordained ministry and the consecrated life suppose a different vocation and a specific form of consecration, due to a peculiar mission (VC, 31).

43

Furthermore:

Consecrated persons, who embrace the evangelical counsels, receive a new and special consecration that, without being sacramental, commits them to embrace - in celibacy, poverty, and obedience - the way of life personally practiced by Jesus and proposed by Him to the disciples (Ibid.).

All subsequent consecration is founded on baptism: *it is intimately rooted in baptism and fulfills it more fully* (PC 5a).

15.2. Consecration and holiness

Although there is close knit connection between consecration and holiness, they are not the same. Consecration is an intervention of God who makes a person his own, creating a permanent objective situation. The baptized, the religious, the priest, even in a state of sin, always remain consecrated. However, in this state, they can be configured as “dry branches” that, although they remain attached to the tree, are dead. And so, they remain such until the obstacles that prevent the circulation of the vital sap of grace are not removed.

However, it is irrational to affirm that a consecrated person, made instrument of the particular presence and activity of Jesus Christ, does not live a life of holiness, that is, of intimate communion with God. The ontological sanctity of the consecrated being presupposes his moral sanctity in an absolute way: *You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and*

have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine (Lv 20:26).

15.3. Consecration and mission

Jesus Christ, in the priestly discourse of the Jewish Last Supper, asks the Father to consecrate the apostles in truth:

Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth (Jn 17:17-19).

As it stands out in the context, the consecration that Jesus asks the Father for his disciples is in view of the mission that he would have entrusted to them before he ascended to heaven: *as you sent me to the world.*

John Paul II, in the Apostolic Exhortation VC, strongly emphasizes the relationship between consecration and mission:

In the image of Jesus, the beloved Son “whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world” (Jn 10:36), those whom God calls to follow him are also consecrated and sent into the world to imitate his example and to continue his mission. Fundamentally, this is true of every disciple. In a special way, however, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ “more closely,” and to make him the “all” of their lives. The task of devoting themselves wholly to “mission” is therefore included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole life of Jesus. The profession of the evangelical counsels, which makes a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view. It can therefore be said that a sense of mission is essential to every Institute, not only those dedicated to the active apostolic life but also those dedicated to the contemplative life (VC 72).

44

In no. 67 of the same document, the Pope suggests to initiate the young aspirants to religious life in this sense from the first years of their formation: *At the same time, from the moment of initial formation, community life must disclose the essential missionary dimension of consecration.*

The exhortation of the SCRIS (1983) highlights the strict relationship between consecration and the apostolate:

By the fact of their consecration, the members are dedicated to God and available to be sent (EE 12).

[God] not only chooses, sets apart, and dedicates the person to Himself, but he engages him in his own divine work. Consecration inevitably implies mission. These are two facets of one reality (EE 23).

Religious dedicated to works of the apostolate continue in our time Christ “announcing God’s Kingdom to the multitude, healing the sick and the maimed” (EE 24, cf. Starting afresh from Christ, 9).

It is good to note that it does not say that they prolong the apostolate of Christ, but that they prolong the presence of Christ, who does the apostolate. The clarification highlights the

existential dimension of the apostle, that is, his “being”, conformed to that of Christ as much as possible, is also in view making his “acting” effective. Before *hearing* the word, the people want to *see* the apostle who possesses the characteristics that make him *credible*.

John Paul II, moreover, sees the apostolate in the founding charism and encourages the religious *to present new answers to the new problems of today's world [...] and translate courageously into coherent choices, which are consistent with the original charism and with correspond to the demands of the concrete historical situation [...] they work boldly in the fields determined the founding charism* (VC, 73).

The citations recalled in this paragraph are of great importance, either for the objective content or for the authoritativeness of the documents from which they are taken. Besides, all, in some way, are connected in the essential relationship of the consecration-holiness-mission trinomial, that must characterize the apostle, according to his own charism.

The content of this chapter, of a general nature, will find concrete applications in the context of the consecration of the Rogationists, in the section where their specific mission will be dealt with (cf. no. 31-32 below).

16. Jesus sees the crowds and feels compassion for them

Let us go back to the passage we read in Matthew (9: 35-38).

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9: 35-38)

The evangelist places the *logion* of our charism between the narrative section of miracles (chapters 8 and 9) and the apostolic discourse (chapter 10).

Jesus *went around*... Jesus, himself personally, and not others. Isaiah had also prophesied it: *It was not an angel or a messenger, it was he himself who saved them, rescued them with his love and mercy, raised them and endured them* (Is 63: 9).

When the time had fully come (Gal 4: 4), Jesus, *the apostle of the Father* (VC, 9), puts into action the mission that he had proclaimed in the programmatic speech in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4: 18-21). He went around - *teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and infirmity* - the vast evangelical territory, where poverty, misery, suffering, physical and moral sickness torment the abandoned crowds like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus taught... Teaching is an essential aspect of the activity of Jesus during his public life. He teaches in the synagogues (Mt 4:23; Jn 6:59), in the temple (Mt 21:23; Jn 7:14), on the feasts (Jn 8:20), and also every day (Mt 26: 55). He is the rabbi who teaches with authority (Mt 13: 54).

His doctrine is not his, but of the one who sent him (Jn 7:16 ff.); he says only what the Father teaches him (Jn 8, 28). Jesus speaks the words of God (Jn 3:34). He wants to make known the authentic message of God and lead men to welcome it.

Jesus preached... immediately after the temptations in the desert, Jesus began preaching, announcing the presence of the kingdom, and inviting to conversion: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Mt 4:17). The theme of the Kingdom of God pervades all the preaching of Jesus.

Jesus cured the sick... During his ministry, on the streets he passes, Jesus meets lepers, lame, blind, possessed, paralytics, oppressed; he expels the unclean spirits and cures diseases (cf. Mt 8 and 9). Illness is a symbol of sinful man; spiritually, he is blind, deaf, paralyzed, and thus the healing of the sick represents the spiritual healing that Jesus comes to bring among men.

Jesus, the supreme consecrated and missionary of the Father for his Kingdom (VC, 22), went around the cities and villages. Then, he stopped his itinerant apostolic activity before the pitiable crowd, described by Matthew (9:35-38). And, *when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

It is necessary to understand the profound value of the attitudes and behaviors of Jesus Christ, which the Rogationist must make his own.

Jesus sees... But his is not an external, superficial look, without any impact on the consciousness. It goes beyond physical attitude and physiological function. Jesus sees in depth; his gaze penetrates within the physical or moral suffering. He does not just see suffering faces; he also sees broken hearts. Jesus sees, perceives, and shares the psychological states of the afflicted people. He sees and does not pass by. He sees and intervenes. The ten miracles that precede our evangelical passage, in chapters 8-9 of Matthew, are symbolic.

46

Jesus sees, stops, gets off the horse, and provides (cf. Lk 10:29).^{*} Jesus sees in the “suffering” a member of his mystical body, of that humanity that he had assumed to redeem. In the man, he sees his brother, the expression of the love of the Father who created him in his image and likeness. He sees the man whom he will save at the price of the blood he shed.

Mercy and compassion, as divine attributes, are eternal, as love is eternal. But the manifestation of these sentiments of divine transcendence towards man is inserted into history from the moment when God seeks Adam the sinner, as we read in the third chapter of Genesis: *Where are you?* It is the first call of Eternal mercy and compassion.¹²

From this moment, the sacred history is the history of God who seeks man. Mercy, compassion, and forgiveness resonate in the history of humanity, with an ever-increasing rhythm, until reaching its concrete and ineffable form in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gets into the dark web of human vicissitude; he immerses within the fabric of history, and concretely covers the entire arc of his apostolic life with the compassionate love of the heavenly Father. For this, he was consecrated with the anointing and sent.

In Jesus, the loving kindness of God appeared (cf. Lk 1:78; Tt 3:4-7). Jesus Christ, supreme sign, the absolute revelation of the Father's charity, perfectly reveals the beating of his heart for the entire world submerged in sin. The heart of God is no longer an

^{*} EN: A reference to the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Author identifies Jesus with the Good Samaritan.

¹² *I thank the Lord our God, who created such a wonderful work in which to find his rest. He created heaven, and I do not read that he rested; He created the earth, and I do not read that he rested; He created the sun, the moon, the stars and I do not read that neither he rested. On the other hand, I read that he created man and at this point he rested, having someone to whom he could forgive sins (fecerit hominem et tunc requieverit, habens cui peccata dimitteret)* (cf. AMBROSIO, *Hexamerón* VI, 76).

anthropomorphism but a real heart of flesh.

God planned in the fullness of time to restore all things in Christ (Ant. Vespers, Monday, Week II, O.T.). The world has a heart:

- the heart of the physical body of Christ, formed in the pure womb of Mary;
- the Eucharistic heart of Christ, on the altars and in tabernacles;
- the heart of the mystical Body of Christ, in the Church;
- the compassionate heart of Christ in the Rogate.

But what com-passion? Cardinal Ratzinger, in the quoted homily (cf. above, in 13), referring to the scene of the Rogate in Matthew, with profound psychology reads the compassion in Christ and describes it thus:

At this point, a word appears in the Gospel like lightning, hardly translatable from the Greek, esplaghniste, which we translate with "sympathized." But the word expresses a more radical participation. It includes the root of the word: "bowels" and refers to the maternal womb, to the identification of the mother with her child, to the sharing of two lives that become one. Thus, Jesus, touched by the suffering of the crowd, by this "darkness", feels compassion that becomes identification. He carries with him the pains of humanity, which become his pains.

The abandoned crowds, like sheep without a shepherd, before whom the Christ of the Rogate trembles with compassion (cf. Mt 9:36), are not only those gathered within the perimeter of the Gospel scene of Matthew but all the afflicted, the sick, the marginalized, the desperate, who populate the pages of the Gospel.

Matthew's scene is only the symbolic vision of a situation that reaches universal horizons of time and space.

It is always the *Christ of the Rogate* who sees, feels compassion, and intervenes:

- in front of the hungry crowds (cf. Mk 6:34);
- before the blind men of Jericho who begged him (cf. Mt 20:34);
- before the widow of Nain (cf. Lk 7:13);
- in front of the leper, he touches and heals (cf. Mk 1:41).

It is always the *Christ of the Rogate* who:

- is deeply moved, begins to cry in front of the grave of Lazarus (cf. Jn 15: 7-10);
- goes in search of the lost sheep and coin (Lk 15: 7-10);
- identifies with the father of the prodigal son (Lk 15:20).

The Christ of the Rogate is a compassionate icon of the heavenly Father. If the characteristic trait of the Christ of the Rogate is compassion, with reference to our charism, we have to conclude that we find the Christ of the Rogate everywhere and always in the Gospel, because everywhere and always, the pages of the Gospel are imbued with the compassion of Jesus Christ.

The infinite compassion of the heavenly Father finds its concretization in the compassionate heart of Christ of the Rogate. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ merges with that of the Father, who has sacrificed *his beloved Son* (Col 1:13) for us. Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption complete the arc of divine *agape*, in the sign of the compassionate love of the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:15).

Father Hannibal affirms: *Let us look at Jesus in his passion; here, love puts him under a wine press, squeezes him, transforms him into a “man of sorrows”. Jesus crucified is the most convincing argument of God’s love for man* (AR, p. 785).

They shall look on him whom they have pierced (Jn 19:37). The pierced heart of Jesus Christ on the cross is the compassionate heart of the Christ of the Rogate who, before giving his spirit into the hands of the Father, said: *It is finished* (Jn 19:30); that is, I have already revealed to the world and brought love and compassion to its fullest, according to the project you entrusted to me.

The compassionate love of the Christ of the Rogate did not diminish with his ascension to the right hand of the Father, but it surpasses the passing of the generations because it is an irrevocable project.

The counsel of the Lord stands forever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations (Ps 33:11). Mary, in Elizabeth’s house, also sings: *his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation* (Lk 1:50).

The apostles and their successors whom we will ask from the Lord of the harvest will be *ministers of divine compassion* in the exercise of the ministry.

17. Compassion is the primary element and soul of the Rogate

The statement that we proclaim in the preface of the Mass in honor of our holy Founder is marvelously true and exalting: *You made Saint Hannibal Mary worthy minister of your Son’s compassion to the crowds, conforming him to his image of Good Shepherd*. God made Hannibal a *worthy minister of compassion*. Compassion is a gift, a charism of the Spirit. God, in the Spirit, shared with Saint Hannibal the compassion of his Son towards the exhausted and abandoned crowds.

This consideration of the spiritual features of our Founder is fundamental from the charismatic point of view. It is confirmed by Cardinal Ratzinger himself, who testifies that in Father Hannibal, the process of identification with the needy brother was “identical” to that of Jesus Christ: *The context of the life of our Blessed is surprisingly identical with this context of the word and action of Jesus*. Christ *commands* the Rogate because he has compassion. Father Hannibal *obeys* the Rogate because he has compassion.

Compassion is the reason for the Rogate-command, as well as the reason for obedience to the Rogate-command. The Rogationist is called to put himself on the side and in the school of Jesus. He must have the capacity to immerse himself into the innermost being of the needy brother, assume the difficult situations, pains, needs and, possibly, share the dramatic conditions of the communities where he is destined, according to the example and experience of Father Hannibal in the Avignone Quarter, to free him from the states of slavery that oppress him. Compassion for the Rogationist cannot be a pure sentiment, but a true co-participation

(cf. above, in 31.7). Therefore, in praying for vocations, before asking for laborers for the harvest, we must ask the Lord of the harvest for compassionate hearts: compassion, in the name and for the love of Jesus Christ, is the energy that gives strength to the laborers.

18. The plentiful harvest is in danger of being lost

Then he says to his disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37b-38).

The Lord of the harvest is God. In the traditional prayer inspired and written in 1880, printed in the typography of the Avignone Quarter in 1885, Father Hannibal addresses the Lord with these words:

Now, You are the Lord of the harvest; You are the mystical Gardener who planted the vineyard of souls and watered it with your Precious Blood, You formed your Church like a flourishing field, like an enclosed garden, in which You like to gather the flowers of holy virtues and the fruits of good works!

18.1. The harvest and its conditions

The crop and the corresponding harvesting in the New Testament have a figurative, symbolic meaning, referring to the final judgment. In our context, the harvest constitutes the abandoned crowds, the sheep without a shepherd. It represents the entire humanity that inhabits the earth on pilgrimage to the heavenly homeland, for which they were created. Therefore, also in our case, the harvest has an eschatological value, though not universal, but personal.

In fact, at the moment of death, man will reach the ultimate goal of his eternal happiness with the condition that he has realized himself according to the fundamental vocation, that of the son of God - which is communicated to him by the grace of the sacraments - and has fully realized his personal historical vocation.

In the writings of our Founder, they are always recurring, either directly or indirectly:

- the miserable state of the harvest;
- the immeasurable disproportion between the abundance of the ripe harvest and the laborers who would have to gather it;
- the extreme urgency of the harvest to avoid its danger of being lost.

The biblical scholar Settimio Cipriani, who deepened our evangelical passages in his various studies and articles, when commenting on Matthew (9:38), affirms:

The "harvest" here obviously refers to the ripening phase, laden with joy and promise, as of a field of wheat waving in the wind. But precisely where the hope was born, there also arises the anguish concern for the owner: the entire

harvest could be lost, if the “harvesters” are not hired in time. The shortage of laborers could make everything fail, thus wasting the precious and prolonged work (S. Cipriani, The Rogate in its biblical foundations, in “Studi Rogazionisti” 17, p. 21-40).

The dramatic horizon of the old and new poverty extends before the eyes of Jesus. He sees all the poor in human history, those who lack something essential for their existence and subsistence: health, food, home, dignity, work, freedom, homeland, etc. John Paul II also includes the little ones in the list of the poor (cf. VC, 82). Jesus sees the *poorest of the poor*, the sinners who lack the highest good, the grace of God. Cardinal Ratzinger thus interprets the gaze of Jesus before the crowds:

And Jesus, with the eyes of the infinite, sees not only this small piece of land, but he sees all of human history: past, present, and future. [...] Indeed, he sees so much pain of men; he sees this shadow of death.

Aware of the dramatic situation that transcends spaces and times and reaches the limits of eternity, Father Hannibal highlights, with the repetition of the all-embracing adjective, the abundance of the harvest and the scarcity of laborers:

Jesus, moved by compassion, exclaimed: The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few, therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest. When our Lord Jesus Christ spoke thus, he had in mind all the centuries, all the cities, all the peoples, all the regions of the world until the end of the centuries. He lamented in his heart the scarcity of evangelical laborers of the Holy Church, more or less severe in some other times (Una grande parola, p. 3).

50

In the scene described by Matthew, Saint Hannibal sees *the most sensitive Heart of Jesus afflicted at the sight of the anger, the resentment, the hatred, the rage, the thefts, the blasphemies, and all the cruelties of men that he embraced in a single glance.*

And he directs his attention further to the sector of the harvest that most affects and worries him, the one formed by young men and women who perish due to lack of evangelical laborers, who would evangelize and bring salvation through their ministry:

Alas! How many young people, in the prime of years, take the miserable path, because in the suitable time the good evangelical laborers were lacking, who would gather and bring them to godliness with Pious Unions, with Associations, with good readings, with holy industries, and with true zeal? The wavering honesty of many plebeian and civilized girls perishes, because there are no Ministers of the Lord who, tireless in preaching, in the confessional, in education, would lead young women to frequent the Sacraments (Scritti, vol. 51, p. 126).

The ripe and abundant harvest is the cause of the anguished concern of the Lord of the harvest, in the perspective that after his many efforts he cannot gather and store it in the granaries, because the laborers are few:

The number of laborers in the vineyard has become scarce; the good laborers in the Church are lacking; the light of the world has eclipsed. Hence the peoples remain in the darkness of ignorance and sin; hence Satan devours the prey,

*the little ones ask for the bread of life, and there is no one to break it for them
(Prayer to the Heart of Jesus to obtain good laborers for the Holy Church).*

19. The Rogate and the intimate sorrows*

Before discussing the relationship between the Rogate and intimate sorrows, it is useful to learn from our Founder the nature and dimensions of the sorrows and pains suffered by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father Hannibal not only identified himself with the compassion that Jesus feels for the flock without a shepherd, but he enters into the compassionate heart of Christ, almost to analyze, deepen. and share the sorrows that torment the Heart of God made man.

In the preface to the work of the venerable Thomas of Jesus, *Torments of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Father Hannibal sees the sufferings of Jesus in a triple perspective:

The adorable Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ has three perspectives: the first is formed by the bitter sufferings of the holiest humanity of Jesus Christ; the second for the unspeakable offenses and disgraces to which he wanted to submit himself for love of us; the third for the inconsolable sorrows of his soul and his divine Heart (Scritti, vol. 60, n. 850).

First, there are the bodily pains to which he willingly submitted himself, in the terrible passion, to pay the debt incurred by all sinful men, from Adam to the last one who will live till the end of history. We read in Is 53: *He has borne our griefs; he has carried our sorrows [...]* *The Lord has laid the iniquities of us all.*

In the divine person of Jesus Christ, we must see the pain in relation to love. Jesus suffers because he loves. Since the love with which he loves his creatures is infinite, even the pains of the scourging, the crowning of thorns, the crucifixion, the torments, and spasms on the cross reach dimensions that we cannot understand. We can imagine the sum of the physical pains mysteriously concentrated and compressed in the heart of the Savior, with very high density and cohesion similar to that which exists within some heavenly bodies.¹³ The state of extreme pain of the Man-God resounds in the lacerating prayer addressed to the Father in Gethsemane, given the atrocious sufferings that await him: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me* (Mt 26:39).

The second category of the pains considered by Father Hannibal is of a mental type. They are the pains caused by indifference, insensibility, insults, inexpressible reproaches, ingratitude, above all, of those who received the greatest gifts from the Lord, such as religious and priests. The first lament of Jesus resounds precisely in the Garden of Olives when he addresses those disciples whom he wanted closer to him than others: *Sic non potuistis una ora vigilare mecum? Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?* (Mt 26: 40).

Father Hannibal defines the third class of pains as *intimate sorrows*, which exceed the

* EN: St. Hannibal Mary used the term *pene intime* which is translated literally into English as *intimate pains*. This English edition translates it as *intimate sorrows*.

¹³ Neutron stars, black holes. A cm³ of these stars weighs several tons on the earth.

physical and the mental. We could describe them “theandrical pains”,^{*} because they were suffered by Jesus, in his specific identity as Man-God, the only savior of humankind. It is the particularly devastating sorrows that are procured for him by those who reject salvation in a decisively obstinate way and frustrate the Savior’s love shown by giving his Body and shedding his Blood.

The bitter waters that flooded the holiest soul of Jesus Christ pour forth from various sources. The primary ones would be, as Jesus Christ himself revealed to Blessed Villani: the sight of all the sins that he carried on himself and for which he took responsibility before the justice of his Father; the human ingratitude, before his love and his sufferings, for which he made the prophet David to say: “Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo?” What profit is there in my blood? (Ps 29:10). The sight of the loss of souls, which made him exclaim through the mouth of the prophet: “Dolores inferni circumdederunt me!” The sorrows of hell encompassed me (Ps 17:5) (Regulation for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920).

The Founder became so much absorbed and assimilated with the intimate sorrows of Jesus, that he cannot find the terms that can express it in the right measure; to express them, he resorts to the most relevant and significant expressions of intimate suffering and most acute pain, which we read in the Bible: the two verses, one of Psalm 29: *Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo? What profit is there in my blood?* and the other of Psalm 17: *Dolores inferni circumdederunt me! The sorrows of hell encompassed me!* The sorrows of Jesus are so great that he feels assailed and overwhelmed by the impetuous waves of an overflowing torrent, which drags him into the darkness of death.

The Founder takes another analogy from Psalm 51:5: *Factum est cor meum tamquam ceram liquescens in medio ventris mei. My heart has become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels* (Ps 21:15); Scritti, vol. 12, n. 1932).

52

The intimate sorrows of Jesus Savior are so atrocious and violent that they almost destroy the cohesion of the heart, which melts like wax and loses its form and its vital function. The phenomenon refers to the divine dignity that is trampled by sin. To express the impossibility of understanding the intimate sorrows of Jesus Christ, Father Hannibal links the love of God with the loss of souls:

Let us measure, if possible, these two extremes: the love of Jesus for souls and the eternal loss of souls. The love of Jesus cannot be measured because it is infinite; the loss of souls cannot be appraised, because eternity is a kind of infinity in time that we cannot comprehend. The pain, therefore, that results from it, is infinite pain (Scritti, vol. 12, p. 85-86).

19.1. The intimate sorrows are a constitutive element of the Rogationist spirituality

Father Hannibal is deeply convinced that there is a very close relationship between the Rogate and the intimate sorrows. Because of this original intuition of his, the intimate sorrows of the Heart of Jesus were the constant object of his meditations, reflections, sermons, and teachings. The meditation on the intimate sorrows is a constitutive element of the specific spirituality of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal and enters into our regulations,

^{*} EN: *Theandric* refers to the union of the divine and the human natures in Jesus Christ.

precisely because of its close connection with the Rogate. Our Founder repeats it several times:

The particular spirit of this institute that is formed on that word of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Rogate ergo etc....' is closely linked with this meditation on the intimate sorrows of the Heart of Jesus, because the soul that pierces through these sorrows cannot remain indifferent to the interests of that divine Heart. It vividly feels them and shares them and would also like to sacrifice itself for those divine interests. Then, that divine word that came from that divine Heart: "Rogate... etc." will resonate in our ear, and in obedience to this command, the soul finds a great means to console the Most Holy Heart of Jesus in his sorrows. This prayer looks directly at the greater glory of God and sanctification of the souls and includes all the interests of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus (Scritti, vol. 61, p. 154).

The reason is obvious. The intimate sorrows are caused by souls who are lost due to a lack of good laborers. With obedience to the command of Jesus, the Lord of the harvest sends collaborators of Christ in the work of salvation, and the cause of his intimate sorrows are eliminated. Therefore, the Rogate is configured as an *unsurpassable dike* that blocks the *most bitter waters* from flooding the Heart of Christ.

Father Hannibal is convinced that the Rogationist who becomes aware of his own identity, according to the profile outlined by the rules, cannot avoid feeling *shipwrecked and drowned in the sea of these ineffable sorrows*. He affirms it in *Declarations and Promises*, XXIII [and XXI]:

[...] In conformity with the Rules of this Pious Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, I will give myself to the meditation of the intimate sorrows of the Heart of Jesus. This means to say that I will consider and reflect on the profound and hidden torments of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, from the first instant of his Incarnation, at the sight of universal sins, at the sight of human ingratitude, at the sight of the harm in the souls of the elect themselves, and especially at the sight of the eternal loss of so many souls! I will submerge myself in this immeasurable abyss of the sorrows of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which surpass by far those of His most Holy Humanity and which very few people consider. I will unite myself to these sorrows of the Divine Redeemer to feel them in my heart; I will contemplate Him lost and submerged in the ocean of these unspeakable pains in the Garden of Olives.

I will feel my heart pierced by so much harm affecting particularly the tender harvest, which is the emerging generations. I will immerse myself in the intimate sorrows of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for such continuous and secular misery (Declarations and Promises, XXI).

The faithful Daughters and lovers of the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus should never neglect the meditation on the intimate sorrows of this Divine Heart, which they usually do in the afternoon with appropriate considerations. Each soul will enter into them, will pity the loving Heart of Jesus that suffers so much, and zeal and fervor will ignite so as to console him as much as possible not only with her sanctification but if possible with the sanctification and salvation of all souls. Zeal will ignite to implore the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary for armies of Ministers chosen for the Shrine, Apostles of Faith and Charity, holy and chosen souls in all social classes, so that the Kingdom of God may be extended on earth over the ruins of the kingdom of sin. All this, so that the Adorable Heart of Jesus

is relieved of his intimate sorrows and infinitely consoled (Regulation for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920).

If we look at our miserable times, we cannot avoid sharing in the sorrows of the Adorable Heart of Jesus, seeing how much scarcity of laborers there is in the mystical harvest (Scritti, vol. 50, p. 103).

(...) in obedience to this command, we find a great means to console the Most Holy Heart of Jesus in his sorrows (Scritti, vol. 61, p. 154).

Obedience to the Rogate is the supreme means of consolation of that Heart, who always had compassion for all, but in the end, did not receive compassion from anyone: *I looked for pity, but there was none; for comforters, but I found none (Ps 69: 21 [20]).*

The Founder is sensitive to the request for consolation that the Heart of Jesus addresses to Saint Margaret Alacoque:

See the Heart that loved so much humankind, (...) but in return receives nothing but ingratitude and insults. (...) At least you, give me this consolation, to make up as much as you can, for their ingratitude. (...) The Father had no other desire in his life than to do everything ad maiorem, ad maximam, ad infinitam consolationem Cordis Iesu! [for the greater, for the greatest, for the infinite consolation of the Heart of Jesus] (AP, p. 254).

Let us close this paragraph with the following affirmation of Father Hannibal: *your loving Heart groans and sighs for the loss of souls but then rejoices and exults when souls are edified, sanctified, and led to eternal life through good laborers (Prayer for good laborers, in Scritti, vol. 6, n. 4488).*

54

Sublime and tremendous is the function and purpose of the Rogate! The Spirit has entrusted to the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal a mission that transcends all other possible missions: to make the Heart of Jesus rejoice and exult, but also tremendous is the thought of unfaithfulness to the Christ of the Rogate.

19.2. The intimate sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Jesus suffers from insults, ingratitude, loss of souls. Father Hannibal affirms that another reason for the sufferings of Christ is the pains suffered by his Most Holy Mother:

...the sight of the sorrows of his Most Holy Mother, who was the only one capable of penetrating the deep abyss of the intimate sorrows of the Heart of Jesus and who had to become the Queen of Martyrs (Scritti, vol. 44, p. 70).

Elsewhere, he integrates this insight through the declaration, promise, and commitment that his disciples must make:

To this meditation on the intimate sorrows of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I will always associate the meditation of the interior sorrows of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who alone fathomed, understood, and shared all the pains and mental sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ (Declarations and Promises, XXIII).

Jesus suffers for the pains of his Mother. Mary suffers for the pains of her Son. The mutual penetration in the deep strata of the soul and the generous participation of their passion are due because only Jesus can understand *the deep abyss of the intimate sorrows* of his Mother, and only Mary can understand *the deep abyss of the intimate sorrows* of her Son. Within Jesus, the image of the Sorrowful Mother is reproduced; and within Mary, the image of Jesus, the suffering servant, is replicated as well. The image is explained in such a total and profound way, such as to create almost a second reciprocal presence within the two persons, who, nonetheless remain distinct, since the phenomenon occurs not in the physical, but in the spiritual and mental way.

We are denied the full comprehension, not only of the pains of Jesus but also of His Most Holy Mother. Some brief reflections. We cannot have the exact grasp of her being the *Immaculate Conception* because it is an experience lived by Adam and Eve before sin. In the same way, we cannot understand the abyss of those pains that are the reason for her glorification side by side the Word incarnated in her purest womb.

Mary, more than Saint Paul, can say: *he loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal 2:20). The Blessed Virgin knows well that Jesus suffered passion and death for her first, even before men and angels. Indeed, *in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, she was preserved free from all stain of original sin.** Therefore, it is evident that more than men and angels, the Virgin participates in the passion and intimate sorrows of Jesus.

Propter quod [because of this] (Phil 2:9). In Christ, the glorification and exaltation of his humanity, today at the right hand of the Father, responds to the atrocious torture and the extreme humiliation of death on a cross. It was the energy developed by the “grain of wheat”, decayed in the deepest layers of the existential condition of a living being, that propelled the humanity of the Word of God into the sphere of divine transcendence.

In a parallel way, the elevation and glorification of Mary above the angels and saints, crowned queen of the universe at the right of the Son, finds its reason in the fact that on earth she was the grain of wheat which, next to her Jesus, reached the mysterious depths incomprehensible to us.

In LG we read that Mary suffered *exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth* (no. 58).

Mary most holy is Mother. Like and above than all mothers, she is sensitive to her Son's pains and would make every effort, if it were possible, to make his sufferings her own. Since this transfer is not possible at a physical level, it happens at a mental level. The pains of the Son spill into the heart of the Mother with the violence of an enormous waterfall. To get a pale idea of the unspeakable sufferings of Christ present in Mary, we can refer to the psychic phenomenon of somatization. When Mary sees the face of her Son crowned with thorns, or the nails that pierce through his hands and feet, she feels in a bloodless way those thorns and nails, piercing through her body, with a pain undoubtedly inferior to that which Jesus suffered, but equally so strong that neither the martyrs nor the saints who had the gift of stigmata can imagine.

Another useful analogy is the phenomenon of acoustic resonance. When we vibrate the string of a guitar and put it at the right distance next to another guitar with a string identical to the one that vibrates, this second string hit by the sound wave, without anyone touching it, vibrates with the same intensity and produces the same sound as the first one. On a spiritual level, the same phenomenon occurs between the body of Christ and that of Mary, so similar to

* EN: Apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX in 1854, which solemnly affirmed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

that of her Son: *caro Christi, caro Mariæ [body of Christ, body of Mary]*.

Furthermore, Jesus shares to his Mother not only the physical pains of his body but also the intimate sorrows that he suffers as Man-God, for the loss of souls that reject salvation. Paraphrasing Saint Paul, Mary could affirm, *it is no longer I who live, but it is the crucified Christ who lives in me* (Gal 2:20). The one who in Nazareth had welcomed in her womb the Word-made-man, under the cross, receives the Word-made-pain. The *gratia plena [full of grace]* is also the *doloribus plena [full of sorrows]*. This grace is not only the fullness of sanctifying grace. It is also the fullness of suffering for Christ: *For it has been granted to that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake* (Phil 1:29).

Christian piety and art present the heart of Mary pierced by seven swords. Simeon's prophecy goes even further: that sword pierces not into the heart, but the soul, with an evident allusion to the exaltation of pain, which invades the noble part of Mary's life: her soul. Let us conclude with the exhortation that our holy Founder, Father Hannibal, addresses to his spiritual children:

While we are in this valley of tears, we must cry with Jesus and Mary: our occupation must be to contemplate the sorrows of Jesus and Mary. Our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, under any title, must always refer to her title as Sorrowful. In any holy image of Mary Most Holy, we must see her Sorrowful and suffering! (Sermon on the Sorrowful Mother, Messina, September 28, 1913, in Scritti, vol. 21, n. 4796).

20. The Rogate, the mystery of collaboration

56

Then he said to his disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9: 37-38).

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Lk 10:1-2).

God wanted to realize the plan of salvation through the incarnation of the Word: the hypostatic union. In other words, human nature, assumed by and in the divine person, while on the one hand is redeemed and sanctified, on the other hand, it offers itself to collaborate in the mission of the Word totally and perfectly, as it is involved fully and definitively. In other words, it is human nature that allows the Word to actualize, in the current economy of salvation, the redemption of the world.

Jesus, in fact, feels and cries like every man; he goes in search of the lost sheep with the feet of a man, works with the hands of a man, expresses the merciful love of the Father with a human heart. He carries out the mission that the Father entrusted to him until death on a cross because he is truly human.

However, in addition to the human nature assumed in the divine person, Jesus Christ, Man-God, the one "consecrated with the anointing and sent" to fulfill the universal saving will of the Father, in front of the infinite amount of the harvest ready to be gathered, needs other

men as collaborators. He asks for them and obtains them from the heavenly Father, the Lord of the harvest (cf. Lk 6:12-13).

Analogous to the mystery of the hypostatic union, Jesus Christ, in entrusting his powers and his mission to the apostles and their successors, wanted to realize what we could define as the “hypostatic association”. With this, Christ does not unite the disciples to himself ontologically, but simply associates them with his person, who always remains the principal, rather unique agent. To carry out his plans, the Lord uses typically secondary causes, that is, his own creatures.

The Vatican II, in no. 5 of the PO, thus says:

God, who alone is holy and who alone bestows holiness, willed to take as his companions and helper men who would humbly dedicate themselves to the work of sanctification. Hence, through the ministry of the bishop, God consecrates priests, that being made sharers by special title in the priesthood of Christ, they might act as his ministers in performing sacred functions. In the liturgy, they continue to carry on his priestly office by the action of his Spirit.

Therefore, we could affirm that, although at a different level, both formulas - hypostatic union and hypostatic association - are necessary, obviously not of absolute but a relative necessity. God could have saved all men with a simple *fiat*.

The two evangelists insert our *logion* in a missionary context. In Matthew, it precedes the apostolic discourse, where Jesus calls the Twelve, entrusted them the message, and instructed them regarding the mission that they have to carry out. Luke places the *logion* after underlining the demands of the apostolic vocation, and at the time, he sends seventy-two (or seventy) disciples.

Since the beginning of his public life, Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him (cf. Mt 4:18-22), then *he appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach* (Mk 3:14-15); He sends them into the world as the Father sent him (cf. Jn 20:21); like him, they have to preach that the kingdom of God is near, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons (cf. Mt 10:7-8); he confers on them his authority (cf. Mt 10:40); they are his ambassadors as if God himself was exhorting through them (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). Finally, he gives himself as the object of preaching (cf. 1 Cor 1:23-25; 2:1-3).

Jesus wanted to delegate his apostolic mission to men who were “his other self”.

The purpose and objective of the Evangelical Rogation is precisely to ask the Lord of the harvest for the collaborators of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation (cf. below, in 22). *They will be his collaborators and the depositaries of all the powers of salvation, the first rings of a chain that will be extended throughout the course of history* (S. CIPRIANI, *Parola di Dio*, p. 70).

21. The fourth vow of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal

According to the understanding of the Founder, all believers are bound to obey the Rogate, although, in the first instance, Jesus Christ directed it to his disciples. However, the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, by virtue of the specific vocation and consecration, chosen and sent for a precise mission, sum up their existence in absolute obedience to the Lord's command. The Rogationist religious lives the specific charism of the Institute insofar as he observes the corresponding vow, as it is recorded in the Constitutions approved by the Church. It is useful, therefore, before examining the commitments deriving from the fourth vow, to refer to the nature of the *constitutions* and the religious vow.

We have reiterated several times that the charism is a spiritual and invisible gift, and it becomes visible in the elements that make up the spiritual and operative features of the religious, who concretizes it and inserts it into the field of the communion of the Church and in the structures of the Institute. Therefore, to live it within a community, the charism must be given a juridical status, expressed in the *constitutions* approved by the Church. The *constitutions* establish and stabilize the way of living the vows, the essential outlines of the proper spirituality and mission, the fundamental norms that regulate the personal and community life of consecrated persons. It is useful to point out that, before being a legal instrument, the *constitutions* reflect the evangelical and charismatic ideal. Indeed, to write them, the founders are assisted by the Holy Spirit. The institutionalization of a charism through the *constitutions* approved by the Church is a *charismatic event*.

The vow is *the deliberate and free promise made to God of a possible and higher good* (CJC 1191,1). It can be "real" if it consists of offering something or service to God, or "personal" when the person dedicates himself and offers himself to God totally and unconditionally. When the religious makes the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, he does not offer God a thing, but the fundamental dynamism of his being, that is, he makes a holocaust of his existence. The personal vow is placed in the order of being (cf. EE 14), based on the specific charism.

Not all religious Institutes have a fourth vow that refers to the charism itself. Father Hannibal fully understood the fundamental importance of the Rogate for the coming of the kingdom and, with wise determination, raised it to the level of a vow that, throughout the years, since the first constitutions of 1926 that bear the Founder's seal, up to the Constitutions of 1998, always kept the triple dimension: *pray-zeal-be good laborers*.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Becoming a priest, he had an idea, that could be something very much acceptable to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin, and filled with great benefits, if two Religious Communities were formed, one of men and one of women, who have the vow of obedience to that command of Jesus Christ: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam, and by means of this vow they would bind themselves to three things:*

1. *To pray every day and fervently the adorable Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph the Angels and the Saints, to implore numerous and holy priests and holy laborers for the Holy Church, for all peoples, for all nations of the world, and most holy and extraordinary vocations for all seminaries, for all religious orders and for all dioceses [...] To spread everywhere, as far as possible, this spirit of prayer in homage and obedience to that divine command*

2. *To live, both male and female communities, according to their limits and possibilities, as laborers of the mystical harvest, working for the spiritual and temporal good of their neighbors (cf. Invitation and Regulation of the private Pious Constitution of spiritual Cofounders and Co-foundresses of the pious*

Given this, let us make a brief analysis of our fourth vow, according to the formula proposed to us in the draft of the Constitutions prepared for the 2010 Chapter (no. 49).*

To fulfill this vow, we commit ourselves to direct and offer to the Lord of the harvest our lives and all the works that form the spiritual and apostolic heritage of the Institute:

§ 1 – *praying* daily to obtain the “good laborers of the Kingdom of God” (prayer-contemplative dimension);

§ 2 – *propagating* everywhere this spirit of prayer and *promoting* vocations (diffusion-vocational dimension);

§ 3 – *being good laborers in the Church by committing ourselves in the works of charity, in the education and sanctification of children and young people, especially the poor and abandoned, in evangelization, human promotion, and the help of the poor* (active-charitable dimension).

21.1. To pray

It must be said that all three areas (pray-propagate-being good workers) are essential. They have the same binding force and are integrated into an *unum* and, according to the Founder, they constitute the mission of the Rogationists (cf. AR, p. 672; *Rules of the Pious Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus*, Rome, November 9, 1914, in *Scritti*, vol. 3, n. 1575).

However, only the first two dimensions define, characterize, specify, and identify us as Rogationists and Daughters of Divine Zeal. The third, *no, it does not*.¹⁵ The apostolate of charity is an essential constituent element, but it is not an element of identification. Indeed, it is the common denominator of many other religious Institutes.

Only the Rogationists, at the institutional level, have the duty, under the charismatic proprium, to live and spread the Evangelical Prayer. The Founder affirms it and repeats it several times:

... a Pious Work, which is perhaps the only one consecrated to that divine Rogation which today, we have to confess, are unleashed from the pages of the two Evangelists, to reverberate in the heart of the Church, to resound like thunder in the ear of all Catholic cities, of all true believers and lovers of Jesus Christ, as the true and most appropriate means needed by the growing desolation of the Holy Place! (PPA 1919).

The letter that the Father Founder writes to Father Jordan (cf. MB III, pp. 481 ff.) is a document which irrefutably shows that the apostolate of charity is not an identifying character. After failing in several attempts of forming a group of clerics, Father Hannibal, begs the

institution of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus and the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart, Oria, November 8, 1910, in *Scritti*, vol. 2 p. 306). EN: The Constitutions of 2010 continues to present the fourth vow in its three-fold dimensions.

* EN: The Author cited the draft of the Constitutions of 2010. This English edition cites the approved and promulgated text of the Constitutions of 2010.

¹⁵ Breathing is essentially constitutive for man and animal. It is so essential that if they do not breathe, they both die. The element that specifies man is not the breath, but the higher and rational part.

founder of the Salvatorians to assume his religious Institutes. Therefore, the letter configures as a true *testament* that contains the inventory of an inheritance that he is leaving to others. In this document, then, we read the two areas of the fourth vow: to pray and to zeal; moreover, he mentions about the Pious Union of Evangelical Rogation, the Sacred Alliance, but he said nothing regarding the orphans and orphanages.

In the *Declarations and Promises*, XXII, we read that being evangelical laborers of the harvest of the Lord is an immediate and legitimate consequence of the Rogate. In any case, the premise is superior to the consequence. Father Hannibal, in many other pages of the precious heritage of his *Writing*, highlights this charismatic truth.¹⁶

A further proof that the peculiarity of the Rogationist charism lies in the first two areas can be found in the affirmation of the first theologian-censor of the Founder's *Writings*:

He was so concerned with the need of the Church to have numerous and worthy laborers and the effectiveness of the evangelical remedy to obtain them so much so that, to realize it, he moved, so to say, heaven and earth. This [the Rogate] was the reason for his life, the dominant note of his writings, the characteristic of his work (PS, Report of Father Valentino Macca).

Father Hannibal moved earth and heaven not to build orphanages, but to have numerous and worthy laborers, who would meet the needs of the orphans and poor throughout the earth.

21.2. The prayer dimension of the fourth vow

The first charismatic duty of the Rogationists is not to propagate and to act, but to pray. Paul VI, in the audience granted to the Capitulars on September 14, 1968, defines in splendidly charismatic terms that which essentially and primarily constitutes the mission of disciples of Father Hannibal: *The name itself qualifies you in the mission and in the image of worshipers and implorers for the highest and most beautiful mission of meriting and preparing vocations for the kingdom of God.*

The Pope clearly says that the first absolute mission of the Rogationist is to be “worshipers” and “implorers”, or rather, the mission of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal is primarily expressed and developed through their charismatic identity: being “worshipers” and “implorers”. For this, they were called and sent.

Paul VI affirms that the name *Rogationist* contains and signifies the *being* and the *opus* of the Rogationist, that is, the identity and the praying mission of Father Hannibal’s disciples. Therefore, it presupposes that the one who carries it must be such. In other words, precisely because the name defines them, the Rogationists must fully express what the name signifies, that is, “worshipers” and “implorers”. Also, with the expression *qualifies you*, Paul VI sees in those who bear this name, not as generic worshipers, but specialists, who can elevate *that being worshipers and implorers* to the best possible level. All this is justified and required by the fact that their apostolate is aimed *for the highest and most beautiful mission*, that of *meriting and*

^{17 16} *it is perhaps the only Institute in the Church which is consecrated to the sublime mission revealed in the divine words of the Gospel: Rogate... (Declarations and Promises, II).*

In order to extend this charity, if possible to all the world, so as to embrace intentionally and universally the greater spiritual and temporal benefits of my present and future neighbors, I will consider the Evangelical Rogation of the Heart of Jesus as the most efficacious means, which forms the special mission of this Pious Institute (Declarations and Promises, IV).

preparing vocations for the Kingdom of God.

The document of the X General Chapter, in no. 9, reiterated this affirmation: *The first mission of the Rogationists is to obey the command of Jesus: Rogate.*

An authoritative comment on the definition of Paul VI is offered by John Paul II at the meeting with the Capitulars on June 26, 2004: “*Rogate*”: *with this invitation, Jesus asks that your whole life become a prayer and that this prayer give life to credible witnesses to Christ who are in love with him and his Gospel.*

Let us listen to Father Hannibal who, in educating his disciples to the obedience of the divine command, is decidedly categorical: *that “therefore” obliges us, urges us, we could almost say, compels us to correspond directly to this command, and to win holy vocations of new priests with our persistent, humble, and trustful prayers* (AR, p. 672).

Obliges, urges, demands: a sequence of words that clearly indicate the duty and the urgency to obey the Rogate, the charism that determines the vocation and mission of those consecrated to the *Rogate*: which is precisely the evangelical Rogation. It is not an obligation that urges and compels from the outside, but it must be felt like an innate need of which the Rogationist cannot do without because the charism of the Rogate is a constitutive element of his being.

According to the example and command of Jesus, we can safely conclude that the mission of the disciples of Father Hannibal is first of all and above all *prayer* because their vocation is essentially a mystery of prayer, of which the Founder had a full understanding. Between the evangelical Rogation and those consecrated to the Rogate, there should be a relationship of identity. This relationship reached the highest absolute level in Father Hannibal, and we can affirm that he was a *man-made-Evangelical Rogation*.

At the community level, the Founder writes in the letter to Father Jordan, *the Institute must be like the fireplace which keeps the sacred fire of this spirit of prayer always alive and the zeal of its propagation ever fervent* (MB III, p. 482; cf. *Lettere*, vol. I, p. 397).

In referring to the apostolic works of the Rogationists, the art. 62 of the draft of Constitutions* (see above) assigns the first place to the Testimony of the Rogate. It affirms that: *The first and natural apostolic service is fulfilled by our very existence transfigured by the evangelical counsels.* A “natural” service, precisely because it is in the very nature of our charism. Therefore, if the communities of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal do not express this peculiar service, they would fail in the duty required by their specific charismatic state, that is, being specialists, teachers, and models of the prayer of vocational fruitfulness.

The Founder addressed this classic affirmation primarily to his spiritual children:

Vocations, like efficacious grace, descend from on high, and if we do not pray, if we do not carry out the command of Jesus Christ, vocations will not descend, and the abundant effects of many labors and so much culture are not achieved. And all this because any effort of ours cannot infuse the effectual and fervent vocation, while the unanimous prayer of the Church can obtain it, and then the work of the bishops in the seminaries can be profitable and productive.

We insist on saying that the only remedy is prayer, not using it means ignoring it, it means not having good vocations (AP, p. 127).

That Word of Jesus Christ is a command of the zeal of his divine Heart. Consequently, Father Hannibal frequently not only turns to the compassionate Heart of Jesus but pleads with

him so that the laborers of the Gospel would come from the same divine Heart. We cannot but return, once again, to the most beautiful prayer that he composed in 1880: *Let your Divine Heart be open, O Jesus, and from it, may good and holy laborers to your Church come. Yes, draw them from the depths of your Sacred Heart [...]. Enrich your Church with this great and priceless treasure of good laborers!*

In a prayer addressed to the holy apostles: *Through your supplications, may the Blessed Jesus draw them out from his divine Heart, and may they be faithful priests who act according to the divine Heart of Jesus.*¹⁷

The Founder transmits this deep conviction to the Sacred Allies, in the *Preface to the Precious Adhesions* of 1919:

Jesus our Lord, with those words, wanted to demonstrate that the salvation of this mystical harvest of souls are his Priests, but to obtain this inestimable good, it is necessary to ask the Supreme Owner, who is God, who is Jesus Himself. He wanted to instruct us that his Priests do not arise by chance, they do not form by themselves, they cannot be formed by human effort; but they come from the Divine Mercy, who creates them, who begets them, who gives them to the world, and, if we do not pray to have them, we cannot obtain them!

Is it all this not obvious?

God sends the Saints on earth. Is this not one of the greatest mercies that He bestows? How can we expect to receive it if we do not ask for it? The command of Jesus Christ is very clear: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam" (PPA, 19, in Scritti, vol. 50, p. 192).

Concluding this chapter, we refer to the words that Benedict XVI addressed to priests and deacons in Freising, on September 14, 2006: they are a sublime and splendid resonance of Father Hannibal's teaching.

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers." This means that the harvest is ready, but God wishes to enlist helpers to bring it into the storehouse. God needs them. He needs people to say: yes, I am ready to become your harvest laborer; I am ready to offer help so that this harvest, which is ripening in people's hearts may truly be brought into the storehouses of eternity and become an enduring, divine communion of joy and love. "Pray the Lord of the harvest" also means that we cannot merely "produce" vocations; they must come from God. Vocation is not like other professions. We cannot simply recruit people by using the right kind of publicity or the correct type of strategy. The call which comes from the heart of God must always find its way into the heart of man. And yet, precisely so that it may reach into hearts, our cooperation is needed. To pray the Lord of the harvest means, above all, to ask him for this, to stir his heart and say: "Please do this! Rouse laborers! Enkindle in them enthusiasm and joy for the Gospel! Make them understand that this is a treasure greater than any other and that whoever has discovered it, must hand it on!" We stir the heart of God. But our prayer to God does not consist of words alone; the words must lead to action so that from our

¹⁷ To express the sending of the workers, both evangelists use the verb *ekbállo*, which means to expel, to cast out, used above all for the expulsion of demons (Mt 7:22 and Lk 13:32). However, scholars agree that in our case, *ekbállo* has the value of "casting out", "taking out", as if the Lord of the harvest took them out of himself, from his Heart. The Founder, in his exegetical interpretation, goes further and even affirms that priests are *begotten* by divine mercy.

praying heart, a spark of our joy in God and the Gospel may arise, enkindling in the hearts of others a readiness to say “yes”. As people of prayer, filled with his light, we reach out to others and bring them into our prayer and into the presence of God, who will not fail to do his part. In this sense, we must continue to pray the Lord of the harvest, to stir his heart, and together with God, touch the hearts of others through our prayer. And he, according to his purpose, will bring to maturity their “yes”, their readiness to respond; in other words, the constancy, through all this world’s perplexity, through the heat of the day and the darkness of the night, to persevere faithfully in his service. Hence, they will know that their efforts, however arduous, are noble and worthwhile because they lead to what is essential; they ensure that people receive what they hope for: God’s light and God’s love.

22. The mystery of *ut mittat*

The final document of the Rogationist VII General Chapter (1986) *Rogationist Community and Communion*, in the chapter “The Rogate at the center of the communion between God and the Rogationists”, maintains in no. 24 that *inside the Trinity, there is a Rogationist dialogue*; and affirms in no. 25: *the Rogate is the key to enter the threshold of Rogationist trinitarian communion*.

Three years earlier (1983), the SCRSI has affirmed in the document EE no. 18:

Religious consecration establishes a particular communion between religious and God and, in him, between the members of the same institute. This is the basic element in the unity of an institute. [...] The foundation of unity, however, is the communion in Christ established by the one founding gift.

63

There is no doubt that each religious Institute has its proper charism. It also has a particular “key” that allows access to the Trinity, to establish a unique communion, and to impose a specific prayer dialogue following the typical consecration and corresponding apostolic commitments.

The charismatic key that the Spirit gave to our Founder is the Rogate, which enables the Rogationists to enter the mystery of the Trinitarian communion, to place themselves *apud Deum* [with God / in the presence of God] with a name and an unrepeatable vocation, to answer the specific call, assuming and all-encompassing their existence in the evangelical Rogation willed by him as the most effective means of collaboration in the history of salvation.

Called by the creative word of God, the Rogationists are deeply aware that (although giving the right value to the apostolic activity) their specific apostolate, considered in the pure state, primarily consists of praying to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his Church.

In this perspective, Father Hannibal affirms, with clarity and determination, that the characterizing and differentiating element of the particular communion in Christ is founded, in an absolute way, on the objective set by the Rogationist prayer dialogue, that is, on the *ut mittat*, to send good laborers in his Church. Thus, he writes:

The prayer or Evangelical Rogation that leans on the great Rogate, commanded by blessed Jesus Christ, refers directly to the “mittat” [...]. Now it is

precisely in that “mittat” that the holy vocations of new priests are hidden; enclosed in that “mittat” is that infallible promise of a God, who commits himself to hear such prayer and to respond to it, by raising well-disposed souls, children dear to His Heart, pious and chosen young people, and instilling in their hearts the omnipotent breath of a holiest irresistible vocation of the Holy Spirit, who, when he calls for divine service and sacrifice, acts in the soul, shares a divine impulsive force, which, although leaving the human will entirely free, effectively impels the one called to achieve the desired good. He cannot find peace and quiet if he does not comply with such an omnipotent impulse. And these are those who are genuinely called, the priests formed by the Holy Spirit, through that prayer commanded by Our Lord Jesus Christ with those divine words: Rogate ergo... (AP, p. 131).

That directly gives us the idea of an arrow directed and launched towards a single objective: the *ut mittat*.

Before dwelling on the mystery of the *ut mittat*, let us see, first of all, how Father Hannibal demonstrates that he has absolutely precise ideas about the theological dimension of the vocation to the religious state. He affirms that the Holy Spirit, by virtue of that prayer commanded by Our Lord Jesus Christ, with the *omnipotent breath of a holy vocation*, freely breaks into the heart of the one called. This action of the Spirit is so effective that, even if he remains entirely free to accept or reject the invitation that comes from above, *he finds no peace and quiet except by consenting to such an omnipotent impulse*.

In this exquisitely autobiographical citation, furthermore, we read the manner and the vocational experience lived by Father Hannibal himself. He confided to his closest companions that his calling was a *sudden, irresistible, and absolutely sure*. Our Founder repeats the same idea in a different context, where he says that the young man who prays this prayer with the proper disposition if he does not have a vocation, could receive it. If he does, he actualizes it by empowering it through the active intervention of the Spirit (cf. below, in 23.4).

Regarding the peculiar finality of the charism of the Rogate, Father Hannibal maintains that there is a difference between the prayer for the sanctification of the clergy (indeed necessary) and the prayer commanded by Jesus with the Rogate. In a letter to Monsignor Guido Conforti^{*} he writes:

But it is a different thing to correspond literally to that divine command! Here it is a question of the powerful vocation of the Holy Spirit, who, after ten days of prayers, descended on the Apostles, still timid and uncertain, to form strong vocations out of them, which the Most High almost held suspended in his divine hands, waiting for the prayer commanded by him, to snatch them off and send them down into many prepared and willing hearts.

And who can tell how many hundreds of thousands of them the Lord has under his gaze on earth? But how can one expect to have these graces if they do not ask for them, as the Lord himself commands it?” (Scritti, vol. 29, p. 163).

The Evangelical Rogation is the “violent” means that God put in our hands to snatch vocations from the Father's hands. The charismatic prayer of the Rogationist must be a *violent prayer*, a struggle to the point of agony, like that of Jesus in the garden and on the cross.

We can easily maintain that the Rogate is not only the differentiating element that

^{*} EN: St. Guido Maria Conforti (1861-1931), Bishop of Parma and Founder of the Xaverian Missionaries.

establishes our specific communion in the Trinity. But it is also the key *to cross the threshold of Trinitarian communion, to fathom the secret designs of God*, to set in motion the action of the heavenly Father and to influence mysteriously the divine decision itself: the *ut mittat* is truly a mystery: *God sends ... if we pray*.

Sending is the sovereign act of God, like creating. However, while in creating, God acts without any collaboration, in sending his laborers to his harvest, he asks for man's cooperation. The transcendent freedom of God, at this point, seems not to be spontaneous but induced by prayer. Indeed, with the Evangelical Rogation, the sovereign and creative act of God, while maintaining the summits of his freedom - which pertains to the very divine essence -, it seems that he wants to be conditioned by human freedom: if man prays, God sends; if man does not pray, he does not send the vocations that he has held suspended in his hands. This process indicates how much God takes prayerful collaboration seriously, to the point of granting those who obey the Rogate to reach the heights of transcendence and, in a certain sense, to participate in the will and power of God himself. All this involves the serious vocational responsibility of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. Father Hannibal, who was perfectly aware of this highest mission, which the Spirit entrusted to him, feels overwhelmed: *This mission is too sublime, and I feel annihilated!* (Speech of April 21, 1907, in AR p. 880).

23. Why must we pray?

To solve the difficult problem of the scarcity of laborers, Jesus commands unceasing prayer to the Lord of the harvest. It is a remedy that seems to be absurd. The Lord of the harvest is God, the laborers are his, and He has every interest so that the crop, whose quantity and urgency of harvesting he knows, is not lost. Despite everything, Jesus commands the prayer. Father Hannibal, teacher and model of prayer, the man chosen by God to receive the "great prayer" commanded by Jesus, gives a series of answers to the "mysterious why".

65

23.1. Because God wants it

Father Tusino writes:

The Father presents a difficulty: but how, if the harvest is God's property, "in messe[m] suam," why do we need to pray to have the laborers?

And he answers himself: *"All that God has disposed to do for our salvation, he ordained that we do it through our prayer; and by an ineffable mystery, the omnipotent will of God, to be fulfilled, needs to be aided by the weak will of man, in the order of grace. God, Himself cannot gather the harvest of souls, that is, He cannot save them if they do not pray, if they do not want to pray"* (AP, p. 126).

The first reason, according to the Founder, is in the fact that God established that to send good laborers, he wants our collaboration, which he expressed through the command: Rogate.

23.2. Because the benefit is exclusively ours

Besides, it is necessary to pray to the Lord of the harvest, because if he sends laborers to his harvest, and if they harvest an abundant harvest, it is not for his advantage. The benefit is exclusively ours, that is to say, the salvation of men, of whom we must request and promote for each other with a prayer to God (AP, p. 126).

Based on the truth of the faith by which all men are *sons in the Son* (Gal 4:5), the Founder wants to tell us: if the Lord of the harvest is God, as God is our Father, in a certain way the harvest is also ours since we are his children. The children, in effect, share the Father's interests and assets. Furthermore, if the harvest symbolizes the multitude of men, each man is our brother; and precisely because we are children of the same Father, we all have to be solicitous and work for the salvation of all. Saint John reminds us of the example of Christ, who, for the love of humanity, his brothers, addressed to the Father not a prayer made of words, but an existential prayer: the sacrifice of one's life. Therefore, ours also must be an Easter prayer. *He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers* (1 Jn 3:16).

We would have to imitate Saint Paul, who testifies to his faith in the disinterested and personal love of Jesus with these moving words: *The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal 2:20).

23.3. We must obey because it is a command

The Rogate is not an advice or an invitation, it is not an exhortation, but a categorical command, an imperative with the same value as *go, therefore, and make disciples of all peoples* (Mt 28:19).

That word of Jesus Christ is a command of the zeal of his divine Heart. It is a word and a command with supreme importance, indeed an infallible remedy for the salvation of the Church and of society (Scritti, vol. 2, p. 307).

When the person who prays becomes aware of the Rogate's objective soteriological value, he feels personally involved and realizes in his conscience an inescapable co-responsibility. Besides, it becomes clear that obeying the Lord's command is not an imposition that comes from outside, but an internal need, a demand of the spirit, and he cannot avoid expressing it with all the strength and as best as possible. For Father Hannibal, obedience to the Rogate is a fire that burns in his bones:

Maybe I am getting a bit too intoxicated on this thought. Still, Your Excellency knows that this great interest of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, that is, the good evangelical laborers of the mystical harvest, formed the intoxication and spasm of my most miserable heart and that this is the divine mission of my least Institutes (Letter to Monsignor N. Zimarino, Bishop of Gravina, Trani, October 11, 1910, in Scritti, vol. 58, p. 139).

Father Hannibal can express these deep feelings of his soul because he indeed made God's subjective love for men his own (*Caritas Christi urget nos. The love of Christ impels us.* 2 Cor 5:14).

23.4. The Obedience to the Rogate fosters, confirms, and sustains vocation

Our Founder writes:

When this prayer with specific formulas infiltrate in the seminaries, the clerics, the students who are praying it will have a rule in view on how to succeed in their vocation, and how they should behave to achieve it; and, besides, their prayer may have the first effect on themselves. The good God will either give or increase in their young hearts the powerful, effective vocation. He alone can turn them into chosen priests and holy laborers in the vast field of the Holy Church (Scritti, vol. 50, p. 109).

The clerics who are reciting daily those prayers attract divine mercy for their success and become increasingly imbued with the importance and mission of the priesthood and find in those prayers the rule of their conduct to sanctify themselves. They become good evangelical laborers for the divine glory and the salvation of souls (PPA 1901, in Scritti, vol. 61, p. 176).

He who has a vocation to the priestly or religious state, in praying the Rogate prayer, feels that he cannot avoid the stirrings that the Spirit who instills in his soul the desire and enthusiasm to make himself available to the salvific plan and realize the call from the Lord. He will have the grace of total availability, like Isaiah: “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Then I said: “Here I am, send me” (Is 6:8). He will let the Word of God lead him with enthusiasm, like Samuel, who answered: “Speak, for your servant hears” (1 Sam 3:10); or like Mary: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Fittingly, St. Thomas defines prayer as placing oneself at the feet of the Lord, opening and expanding our will, and making it available to embrace his project: *Oratio est quaedam explicatio nostrae voluntatis apud Deum ut eam impleat. [Prayer is the unfolding of our will to God that He may fulfill it. Summa Theologica Part III, Q21, Art. 1].*

67

23.5. Because Jesus prayed

There is another reason, highlighted by our Founder: the example of Jesus Christ, who teaches what he himself first practiced:

Of our Lord, it is said that: cœpit facere et docere [he began to do and teach (Acts 1:1)]. If therefore, He commanded the Disciples to ask for the evangelical laborers with prayer, it means that He himself prayed for such a holy purpose. Indeed, before calling the Apostles, he prayed a whole night, as the Gospel tells us (Scritti, vol. 43, p. 22).¹⁸

In these days, he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles (Lk 6:12-13).

Only in this passage from Luke does Jesus spend *the whole night* in prayer. The choosing of the apostles is an event of supreme importance that requires an entire night of

¹⁸ Pious remembrance on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress held in Rome in June 1905.

intimacy with the heavenly Father, to ask him to send those whom he would have given his same powers and to whom he would have entrusted his same mission of salvation.

Father Hannibal comments:

The very example of our divine Redeemer shows how necessary this prayer is. He himself had to call to the holy priesthood the first ministers of the law of grace, those who had to be like the first fertile seed of the Catholic priesthood: then, what did He do? What means did he use to form the vocation of the twelve fishermen? Before seeking for them, before inviting them, He retires on the mountain and prays! He prays on a mountain as if from there he wanted to make his ardent prayer ascend more directly to his Father; he prays in the night [...] accompanying his prayers cum lacrymis et clamore valido [with tears and loud cries. Heb 5:7] [...]. As soon as he descends from the mountain, still wet with tears and sweat, he calls the apostles to follow him, to make of them the chosen first fruits of his priesthood. What a lesson for all of us to understand how great such a grace that must be asked with particular prayers! (Scritti, vol. 3, p. 38).¹⁹

The significant events in the life of Jesus are preceded by prayer. Jesus often retired alone at night and prayed, preferably on the mountain, a privileged place of encounter with God. Prayer falls in the category of mystery. In this specific prayer of Jesus, the mystery becomes more mysterious, insofar as the choice of the Twelve is determined and dictated by the heavenly Father.

The Founder highlights Jesus' way of praying *cum lacrymis et clamore valido* (Heb. 5:7). The Rogate commanded by Jesus, a prayer of vocational effectiveness must have the characteristics of the prayer of Jesus, the prayer of the grain of wheat that dies.

As in physics, the transformation of electrical energy produces heat in the transformers, which allow the transport of current over long distances, so the prayer to obtain priests for the Church, empowered to bring the light of faith to the farthest horizons, cannot but be like that of Christ: a prayer that sheds blood.

68

24. Evangelical Rogation and holiness

Regarding the conditions for the effectiveness of the Rogationist apostolate - like any other ministry - its spiritual fruitfulness is connected to our union with Jesus, like the branches connected with the vine: *I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he it is who bears much fruit* (Jn 15:5). This link between union with Christ and fruitfulness is particularly valid for the prayer of the Rogationist.

Christ is at the same time the efficient, exemplary, and final cause of our mission, insofar as our apostolate is aimed to produce above all that particular type of configuration to Christ that is actualized in the priesthood and religious life.

John Paul II attests:

¹⁹ *News and Regulations for the Sacred Allies.*

The very prayer of the "Rogate", source of an original form of apostolic life, is not merely a prayer addressed to God, but a prayer lived in God: for it is conceived in union with the merciful heart of Christ, motivated by the "sighs" of the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:26) and addressed to the Father, the source of all good (1997, Centennial of the works).

For this reason, our prayer mission (= *missione orante*) assumes a strong union with Christ. In other words, such an essential prayer for the coming of the kingdom demands from those who were entrusted with it by the Spirit a life of mystical union, that is, a genuinely holy life. And this is because:

1. Prayer must be done in Christ: *If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you* (Jn 15:7).
2. We must ask for good laborers *in the name of Jesus*. This requires our holiness; the hands that lay the prayer in the hands of Christ, who in turn presents it to the heavenly Father, cannot but be pure: *Truly, truly, I say to you: if you ask anything the Father, he will give it to you in my name* (Jn 16:23). In Christ, each man establishes a filial relationship with God; indeed, he lives the same divine life, making the relationship of the Son with his heavenly Father his own.
3. Finally, it has to be done with Christ, who was raised at the right hand of the Father, who *always lives to make intercession for them* (Heb 7:25), the High Priest, *holy, blameless, unstained* (Heb 7:26), whom no one can accuse of sin (cf. Jn 8:46).

Because of these reasons, it becomes clear that our life must reflect the holiness of our Founder, defined by Father Vitale as an *angel in the flesh*. Pure and limpid, like the incorruptible light of the stars, Father Hannibal ascended the altar of the Lord every day, with *clean hands and a pure heart* (Ps 24:4). He belonged to the category desired by Saint Paul when he exhorted the Christians of Philippi with these words: *May you be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world* (Phil 2:15).

The precept *be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48) is the fundamental law for every Christian and much more for religious and priests who have to strive for perfection through a permanent going out of themselves, to conform themselves to Christ until they reach that identification that we admire in the saints and in particular in Saint Paul. As we go deeper into the holy life of Father Hannibal, it becomes increasingly evident that he is truly a man immersed and submerged with all his weight into the mystery of God.

Exhortations to holiness were given to the Rogationists by John Paul II, in the audience for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Father Hannibal, on December 6, 2001:

What needs to be done to ensure that the vigorous tree, planted by your Blessed Founder, continues to bear fruit in abundance? Dear Brothers and Sisters, the answer to the question that you pondered over in the Jubilee Year, is age-old and yet ever new: it is holiness, the fertile soil in which your religious Family has grown, a soil that can still promise a hopeful and fruitful future in the new millennium.

In the letter addressed to the Superior General, Father Giorgio Nalin, on the occasion of the General Chapter (June 26, 2004), the Pope underlines the need of holiness, which must characterize the Rogationists, fittingly as apostles of the Rogate:

The call to the universal vocation of holiness that I wanted to propose once

again in my Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte (cf. nn. 30-31) rings out in particularly clear tones for the apostles of the "Rogate", whose mission is to spend themselves without reserve as humble and faithful workers at the service of the coming of God's Kingdom, praying daily for vocations, spreading this prayerful spirit everywhere and promoting all vocations.

Again, John Paul II addresses the Irish religious (at Maynooth, October 1, 1979) with these words:

But remember always that your first field of apostolate is your own personal lives. Here is where the message of the Gospel has first to be preached and lived. Your first apostolic duty is your own sanctification.

In the *Declarations and Promises*, I, Father Hannibal exhorts his disciples to the highest possible holiness:

I enter this community without any thought of personal convenience, but through a call which I felt in my heart to give myself more completely to the service of God, for my own greater sanctification, and the greater good of souls. I felt drawn to do this by means of regular observance, discipline, the exercise of religious virtues, and the sacred bond of the religious profession. All aided by God's grace and my goodwill.

The holiness of the Rogationists is consequential to their charism. It is Saint Hannibal who expresses it with this exhortation:

Therefore, in the first place, it is necessary that we, who ask the Lord good laborers for the Holy Church, must not be bad laborers of the mystical vineyard. We must strive for our sanctification and the sanctification and good of all souls (AR, p. 86).

70

In *Declarations and Promises*, XXII, after having asked to raise supplications and sighs to the Most High to fill the Holy Church and the whole world with good and evangelical laborers, he continues to emphasize the means to make prayer effective: *and for this purpose, in the first place, I will strive for my sanctification so that I can work fruitfully in the sanctification and salvation of others (AR, p. 718).*

As the Founder says, they cannot but be saints those who should:

Incessantly implore the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, his Most Holy Mother, the Angels, and the Saints, so that the Holy and Divine Spirit may Himself raise, with omnipotent vocations, most chosen souls, priests of zeal and charity for the salvation of souls, and so that the Almighty God would want to create Himself these new chosen apostles and souls of highest holiness for every social class (AR, p. 665).

Father Hannibal does not ask for “generic laborers”, but rather high-level specialists, men of God in the stature of Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Dominic, Saint Alphonsus. He asks for priests who are icons of the holiness of Jesus Christ because they are generated from the Heart of Christ. The Founder addresses the Holy Spirit with a prayer to obtain these giants of holiness, wherein the groans of the Holy Spirit are united with those of the praying Rogationists, creating a choir and an entirely charismatic climate.

Holy and Divine Spirit, please continually renew your divine Pentecost on earth. Raise new, holy, and zealous laborers of men and women in the entire world. Send from heaven your powerful and triumphant vocations. But you want your Pentecost to be preceded by unanimous and fervent prayer. You are always rain down the righteous from the sky, but justly you want that the gaze, the supplicating hands, the groans and sighs of the peoples rise to the sky so that you would want to open wide the heavens and rain down the holiest vocations on the earth, like living flames of fire. [...] Now then, most adorable Holy Spirit, groan in us, and make us all cry with unspeakable sighs, [...] to snatch from the most intimate yearning of the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus, this most excellent grace of all graces of the divine glory and the salvation of souls!

Let us conclude with another attestation from Father Hannibal: *This spirit of prayer for this highest interest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that is, the grace to have good laborers for the holy Church, I strive to make it the spirit and life of this Work* (Letter to Father Cusmano, February 19, 1885, in *Scritti*, vol. 58, p. 27).

25. The mystery of a presence

Before proceeding to the reflection on the Rogate-Eucharist relationship, I consider it is useful to begin with some concepts about the mystery of faith par excellence, which Christ renews through the priest's ministry. The real, glorious, and pneumatological *presence* of Jesus in the Eucharist is and will always remain a mystery, which transcends and surpasses our reason but does not contradict it. The truth of the Lord's body and blood, after consecration, can be accepted only through adherence to faith.

When Jesus at the Last Supper says: *This is my body - this is my blood*; or better when he says: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh* (Jn 6:51), he does not intend to speak of his physical body limited by the space-time coordinates, but of his body in the glorious state, enlivened by the Spirit, at the right hand of the Father.²⁰

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are present in the Eucharistic mystery, on the foundation of the unique divine essence, by virtue of the intimate and reciprocal immanence or interpenetration (*circumincersion, perichoresis*). This unity-communion in love repeatedly revealed in the Gospel of John (cf. Jn 10:38; 14:11) can exist in the Eucharist as well.

However, the presence of the Father and the Spirit in the Eucharist is not of the same nature as that of Jesus. The Father and the Spirit cannot say: *"This is my body"* because only the Son was incarnated by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.

In as much as the Most Holy Trinity in the Eucharist, consequently, the Trinity in the universe with all creatures. *In him, we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28).²¹

²⁰ By virtue of the words, the body is under the species of bread and the blood under the species of wine. By virtue of natural concomitance, under the species of bread, we have not only the body but also the blood and, vice versa, under the species of wine.

²¹ Enrico Medi, a scientist and a man of great faith, speaking of the Eucharist, said: *There is everything inside: there is the universe, power, light, faith, greatness, history, men, judgment, hell, the Paradise, eternity; there is*

Benedict XVI, in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* no. 8, affirms:

The Eucharist [...] there the Deus Trinitas, who is essentially love (Jn 4:7-8), becomes fully a part of our human condition. In the bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal (Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26), God's whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us. God is a perfect communion of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Trinity is present here on earth also in each one of us. This doctrine flows from the dogma of sanctifying grace, which is an anticipation or inauguration of eternal life. Benedict XVI, in the *Angelus* of the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity (June 11, 2006) affirmed:

Those who encounter Christ and enter into a friendly relationship with him welcome into their hearts Trinitarian Communion itself, in accordance with Jesus' promise to his disciples: "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14: 23).

Every time the Rogationists sign themselves with the sign of the cross, they have the opportunity to rekindle this divine reality, also in a charismatic dimension. When they say: "*In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,*" they do not only express an act of faith, or only plunge themselves into the ocean of God's infinite love, spiritually renewing an act of Eucharistic worship, but they rekindle the memory of the eucharistic genesis.²² They offer once again their actions and their very selves, together with Jesus Christ on the cross, to obtain holy priests.

The Rogationists in all the celebrations or participation in the Eucharist, among the many intentions, cannot fail to include and privilege that of obtaining holy priests for the Church of the Lord.

Our holy Founder's faith in the divine presence and the conduct of faith that he reserved for the Eucharist reach the summits in front of him, probably still unclimbed. We read a wonderful confession that Father Hannibal made to his spiritual director in 1890, about the age of thirty-nine and after twelve years of his priestly consecration:

Father, I feel a great desire for Our Lord Jesus Christ and his divine Presence is so sweet to me. I would like to do much for his glory and the salvation of souls. I would like to become a great saint for this purpose (PS, vol. 2, p. 1198).

From the many testimonies, from the confidences he made to those close to him and, above all, from his life, it becomes indisputably clear that the Eucharistic presence constituted the *habitat* of him who in the Eucharist has recognized the foundation and reason of the

God the Father, there is the love of the Holy Spirit, there is the immaculate body of Christ and the blood of Mary, which became the blood of Christ.

²² *All this has been written so that the memory remains perpetual and we never lose sight of the fact that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was the Author of this His Pious Work consecrated to his Divine Heart, which is always alive and true, loving and palpitating in the holy tabernacle, always working in our midst with that divine grace of which he in the Most Holy Eucharist is an infinite abyss; working with those divine lights that continually radiates from the most ardent furnace of his divine Heart in the sacrament. Therefore, all our thanks, all our praises, all our affections, all our sighs, all our longings, all our thoughts, all our love, all our being, must first of all be directed to the adorable Sacramental Jesus. (Regulations for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920)*

religious Congregations he started. The indicative signs of his not-so-common faith in the Eucharistic presence are innumerable and, in some cases, decidedly heroic (cf. AP, p. 92). Father Hannibal's passion for the Eucharist was real, alive, intense, enthusiastic, all-encompassing, passionate, impetuous, characterized by a spiritual childhood of extraordinary beauty.

This original Eucharistic *habitat* could not be a personal privilege, but he wished it to belong to all the members of the Pious Work. In the sermon on the title of Jesus *The Solitary Dweller of the Holy Tabernacles* (May 11, 1913), the Founder seems to take the Pious Work by the hand, bring it to the tabernacle, and address Jesus with these words:

Open to me the door of every holy tabernacle. Make me enter; I am the Pious and humble Work of the interests of your Heart, I want to keep you company, perpetual and faithful company, I want to love with you, I want to suffer with you, I want to offer myself to you, I want to groan and pray with you (Scritti, vol. 54, p. 63).²³

Father Hannibal searched with all means and with effective initiatives (July 1st, sacred street sweepers, and many others) to transmit his Eucharistic faith to his followers. A coherent faith, which had to be expressed in the way of behaving and relating to Jesus in the Eucharist and extended to the sacred places where he was sacramentally present. In the area of Eucharistic devotion, the Founder's gestures, animated by his living faith, had a precise *pedagogical function*. It was a Eucharistic catechesis in action, which profoundly affected the soul of the first disciples, the poor, the children, who had to internalize the certainty of the divine, real, substantial, and personal presence of Jesus and firmly believe that entering in the chapel, they came to the sacred place, the space of God, of the one who always maintains his loving transcendence.

He wrote, on August 2, 1897, the "penal regulation" for the young girls, composed of twenty-six articles, on the way of behaving in church and reciting prayers (cf. *Scritti*, vol. 5, p. 19).

26. Eucharist and Rogation

The Rogationists, who pray the evangelical Rogation within the Holy Trinity present in the Eucharist, have the certainty of being heard. They could raise their eyes to heaven and say like and with Jesus Christ at the moment of raising Lazarus: *Father, I thank you for you have heard me; I knew that you hear me always* (Jn 11:41-42). And this for various reasons.

²³ For Father Hannibal, the Eucharist was the holy mountain:

1. Sinai, where the Holy Spirit had given him the divine command of the Rogate, with the corresponding law;
2. Moriah, where he offered himself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, through total consecration to the Rogate;
3. Calvary, where he gladly united his crosses to that of Christ, so that the Evangelical Rogation would become universal.
4. Tabor, where he carried out the continuing process of his transfiguration and conformation to the Christ of the Rogate;
5. Carmel, because he could not imagine Jesus without Mary. Indeed, he believed that, together with Jesus, Mary had been also a bearer of the Rogate.

1. Because it is a prayer commanded by Jesus, and it cannot but be heard: *This prayer commanded by Christ is infallible in its effect; otherwise, we would have to say that Jesus Christ commanded it in vain* (PPA 1919).

2. Because in the Eucharistic celebration, we pray in total spiritual communion with Christ, we incorporate ourselves into the prayerful activity of Jesus. Indeed, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the Eucharistic celebration, with Christ, we become one priest - one victim – one offering. In the epiclesis of communion, we ask the Lord to send his Spirit to act in us this new being in Christ: *Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ* (EP 3).

Benedict XVI in the apostolic exhortation SC, to make us understand in some way this involvement with Christ in the Eucharist, resorts to an analogy of a current scientific interest, such as the nuclear fission:

*The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving." He "draws us into himself."*²⁴ *The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, a sort of "nuclear fission"*²⁵ *to use an image familiar to us today. It penetrates to the heart of all being; a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all (1 Cor15:28) (SC 11).*

In the same document, the Pope remarks that the Eucharistic celebration is the work of *Christus totus* and recalls the daring words of Saint Augustine:

74

The great Bishop of Hippo, speaking specifically of the eucharistic mystery, stresses the fact that Christ assimilates us to himself: "The bread you see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. The chalice, or rather, what the chalice contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. In these signs, Christ the Lord willed to entrust to us his body and the blood which he shed for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have received them properly, you yourselves are what you have received." Consequently, "not only have we become Christians, but we have also become Christ himself." We can thus contemplate God's mysterious work, which brings about a profound unity between ourselves and the Lord Jesus: "one should not believe that Christ is in the head but not in the body; rather he is complete in the head and the body" (SC 36).

²⁴ Several times Benedict XVI repeats this thought:

Once again, I must return to the Eucharist. "Because there is one bread, we, though many, are one body", says St Paul (1 Cor 10: 17). By this he meant: since we receive the same Lord and he gathers us together and draws us into himself, we ourselves are one. (WYD, August 21, 2001).

Christ is truly present among us in the Eucharist. His presence is not static. It is a dynamic presence that grasps us, to make us his own, to make us assimilate him. Christ draws us to him, (Bari, May 29, 2005).

Through this gaze of adoration, he draws us toward himself, within his mystery, through which he wants to transform us as he transformed the Host. (Homily in the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, June 15, 2006).

²⁵ Nuclear fission is a nuclear reaction in which atoms of uranium 235, plutonium 239, or other suitable heavy elements are divided into fragments in a process that releases energy.

Furthermore, the Eucharistic celebration is the most pleasing prayer to the Lord of the harvest, because, in the Eucharist, the Son of God does not pray to say words but offers his own body in sacrifice. In offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Rogationist does not limit his prayer to verbal expressions, but in Christ and with Christ, he becomes one sole victim - one sole offering - according to the teaching of Vatican II: *Participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice, source and summit of all the Christian life, they offer God the divine Victim and offer themselves together with it* (LG 11). Not only that, but by accepting the exhortation of Saint Paul, he extends this offering at all times throughout the day: *I urge you, therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice to God; this is your spiritual worship* (Rom 12:1-2).

John Paul II addresses the Rogationists (May 16, 1997, Centennial of the Congregation) and invites them to follow the Founder's example, with these words:

The first condition is to put the Blessed Eucharist at the center of personal and community life, in order to learn from it how to pray and love according to the Heart of Christ, indeed, to unite the offering of his own life with the offering Christ makes of his, continuing to intercede with the Father on our behalf (cf. Heb 7:25; 9:24). After the founder's example, may every member of the Rogationist family be a profoundly Eucharistic soul!

The Holy Father, who raised Father Hannibal to the honors of the altar, the authentic and qualified interpreter of his charismatic thought and doctrine, has the certainty that the Evangelical Rogation reaches the summit of perfection in the Eucharist: *The Eucharist is the culmination of ecclesial prayer: in this the prayer of Christ and of the Church for vocations is fulfilled according to the Lord's explicit mandate: Rogate, ergo, Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem suam* (Mt 9:38). *Rogate! Rogationists! (Address to the Rogationists, July 26, 1997).*

75

Father Hannibal was deeply convinced of the efficacy of the Eucharistic prayer to obtain good laborers. Hence, from the early days of his mission in the Avignone Quarter, as a wise pedagogue and mystagogue, he catechized his children so that they understood the nature and value of the Eucharist. He writes:

Since the teaching on the infinite value of the Holy Mass predominates in this Pious Work and everyone is educated to consider it as the center of divine wonders, as the most effective, indeed infallible means to obtain every grace, thus each day the Holy Mass is offered with the recitation of a special short prayer to obtain good Laborers for the Holy Church (PPA 1901).

The understanding of the Holy Mass was enhanced as much as possible. He made it clear that with the offering of the Holy Mass, every grace is obtained; that the Holy Mass is everything, that when the Divine Victim is sacrificed, the heavens open and graces rain down (PPA 1919).

Needless to say, the daily Holy Mass was applied for these intentions, for which no offerings were received, in order not to divide the daily intentions of the special fruit of the great Sacrifice"

We quote here one of the many prayers to obtain holy priests, raised to the Lord through the merits of Christ in the Eucharistic. With the usual all-encompassing note, our Founder unites his supplication to obtain holy priests to the *intimate groans of the Spirit* and retraces all the moments of the liturgical action and all the mysteries of the life of Christ:

O most loving Father, God of all consolation, we ask you for this most desired grace with the infinite groans of the Spirit for the love of your Only Begotten Son who now, by your grace, we offer You at the altar. From the moment we say Introibo ad altare Dei, we intend that all the sacred words of the Holy Mass, all the rites, and gestures, would be like so many ardent supplications with which we implore from your divine clemency that most desired grace.*

And in the solemn moment in which we raise the Body and Blood of your divine Son, in that deep silence, we want to present to you all the mysteries of the life, passion, and death of your Only Beloved Son and we want to say to you: Holy Father, listen to us for the love of Jesus, your Son.

At this point, the supplication unfolds like a movie, that recapitulates the whole life and passion of Jesus:

1/ by his incarnation,

2/ by the nine months in which he did not abhor being enclosed within the womb of the Immaculate Virgin,

3/ by his birth,

and it continues so until *the abandonment on the cross and his most bitter death*; finally, it concludes: *Holy Father, hear us and give us the priests that we desire (Prayers to the Lord in Scritti vol. 1, no. 143).*

Father Hannibal dares to keep going. And what does he do? As if freezing in a frame of the most dramatic scene of Jesus' earthly existence, he turns the heavenly Father and tells him to look at the face of his Son on the cross:

In those solemn moments, we intend to present to you the adorable Body of Jesus your Son as He was on the cross when He addressed You to intercede for the cause of humanity, [...]. We intend to tell you: Holy Father, respice in faciem Christi tui. Look upon the face of your anointed. (Ps 83:10 Vulg. / Ps 84:9)) [...] so that our supplication may be worthy to enter before your presence and be heard (Prayers to the Lord in Scritti vol. 1, n. 143).

Afterward, Father Hannibal leaves Calvary, re-enters in himself, and the prayer resounds at the moment of the most intimate intimacy with the body of Christ:

When the most precious body and the blood of the divine victim have descended already in our miserable heart through the consummation of the sacred species with which the immense sacrifice is accomplished, oh, then in the brief moment of recollection, with the divine Treasure that is in us, we beseech you, saying: Holy Father [...] accept our humble supplication; look kindly at our present need. Please, send us chosen priests (Prayers to the Lord in Scritti vol. 1, n. 143).

Always brilliant and original, Father Hannibal imagines the scene of the calling to the priesthood within the Eucharist, through the living voice of Christ and the shooting of *loving*

* EN: *Introibo ad altare Dei* [I will go up to the altar of God], taken from Psalm 42, are the first words which, until the reform of the Liturgy by the Vatican Council II, the priest pronounced at the foot of the altar at the beginning of the Mass.

arrows, from the depths of the sacred tabernacles. This is how the prayer articulates:

O Most Adorable Lord Jesus, to You, hidden in the most ineffable mystery of your infinite love, we raise our ardent groans. O Restorer of the human family, deign to send the good evangelical laborers for the salvation of all peoples. Oh, even if you remain hidden under the Eucharistic species, your Divine Heart is not silent, your omnipotent Word is not silent; shoot your loving arrows and call young men to the priesthood; make your sweetest voice be heard from the depths of the holy tabernacles in all Catholic cities, by many young people, by many children, and call them efficaciously to your sanctuary (Scritti, vol. 6, p. 21).

John Paul II, in tune with the thoughts of Father Hannibal, affirms that the Eucharist is the most effective theological environment for vocational prayer and discernment of the vocation of young people:

The centrality of the Eucharist in the life and ministry of priests is the basis of its centrality in the pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. It is in the Eucharist that prayer for vocations is most closely united to the prayer of Christ the Eternal High Priest. At the same time, the diligence of priests in carrying out their Eucharistic ministry, together with the conscious, active, and fruitful participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, provides young men with a powerful example and incentive for responding generously to God's call. Often it is the example of a priest's fervent pastoral charity which the Lord uses to sow and to bring to fruition in a young man's heart the seed of a priestly calling (EdE 31).

It is useful to re-read what was written, about the same topic, in no. 19 of the final document of the second International Congress for Vocations:

77

The Eucharist has a decisive importance for each vocation. The Lord Jesus is present there as the one who gives himself to everyone and makes himself bread for the life of the world. The Eucharist is the source of the ministerial priesthood, the source, and culmination of the entire Christian life and of every total consecration to the cause of the Gospel. The Christian community must convert itself to the Eucharistic adoration. This adoration must start from consecrated persons. In the beginning, Jesus chose the first collaborators among the people who were with Him. Even today, many receive His calling in being close to Him in adoration, in receiving Him, in participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in serving at the altar.

In the current order of providence, the Evangelical Rogation is a mystery that finds space and light in the Eucharist, where the Father's action of the sending is pleaded by the oblation of the crucified, risen, and glorious Son, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the Eucharist, the evangelical Rogation prayed with Jesus Christ *passed into the heavens* (Heb 4:14); from the heavens, his Spirit descends on earth, and places in the depths of the hearts and minds of many young people and children the vocation to the priesthood and/or to the life of total religious consecration. Once again, we must affirm that the privileged theological place to answer the Lord's command is the Eucharist, where:

- the Father holds the vocations in his hands;
- the Son offers himself as a victim together with those who pray, so that the Father may send;

- the Holy Spirit reaches those who are called, brings the charism, and consecrates those whom the Father calls through the Son.

27. The Eucharist, Perennial Spring of the Rogate

The event and the charismatic moment that marked the vocation of Father Hannibal did not begin and end in the Church of St. John of Malta but they are actual history, which is repeated similarly, without interruption, in front of the tabernacle, in every Rogationist today, within the Congregation.

It is an experience of the Spirit, as a result of the charismatic state, that persists in the Congregation, extends all times, and invades all spaces on the planet, where there are Rogationists. They will be able to have the full Christological and ecclesial understanding of the Rogate-word, not only through reading and the necessary exegetical insights of the passages of Matthew and Luke but, above all, by learning directly from the Christ of the Rogate, who is present in the sacrament of the altar, provided that they let themselves be led by the Spirit - the only one who can make us know the *full truth* of the specific consecration (cf. Jn 16:13).

In the prologue of his Gospel, John reveals the mystery of the incarnation of the Word and his presence among us: ... *and He dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14).²⁶

Father Hannibal exults with deep joy because the same Word of God incarnated, finally, after two years of prayerful and fervent waiting, *came* among his own in the Avignone Quarter and radiates and makes himself present in the sacramental signs in all Rogationist religious communities of the world:

1. *He came not to leave anymore, [...] but to stay with his divine presence.*
2. *He came as a loving father in the midst of his children,*
3. *to form a small family, that*
4. *lived on his flesh and blood, and*
5. *was made capable by his real Presence in Sacrament to be able to receive*
6. *from his divine lips the Command of the Divine Zeal of his Heart: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam"; and this command is in the most intimate connection with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who cannot subsist - having Himself decreed so - without the Priesthood (Regolamento per le Figlie del Divino Zealo del*

²⁶ ... *he pitched his tent (eskénosen) among us*. John certainly alludes both to the tent of the desert, as well as to the temple of Jerusalem, places where God made himself present in the midst of his people. With the incarnation of the Word, his humanity becomes the true sanctuary. Saint Paul, in the letter to the Colossians 2:9, affirms: *For in Christ the fullness of divinity dwells in human form*. It must also be remembered that the Jews, in order not to pronounce the name of God who is present in the temple, used this expression: *shekiná*, which means presence. Now, in the time of the Church, the Logos is the *shekiná*, the living presence of God among us.

He came: the first movement is always from God-Father, who creates, sustains, loves all his children.

Father Hannibal sees in the face of the Eucharistic Christ the face of the Father - *Who has seen me has seen the Father* (Jn 14:9) - a *most loving* Father who evokes the tenderness of God of the Old Testament (Jer 31:20; Is 49:15) and even more of the Gospels (Mt 6:8. 31-32; especially the parables of mercy), which reveal not only that *God is love*, but that this love was incarnated in the crucified Christ. He is the merciful love *who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth* (1 Tm 2:4), through the bearers of the *truth*, particularly the priests, whom we ask the Lord of the harvest with the prayer commanded by Christ.

Furthermore, the Founder sees the Father in the Eucharist because he is the final goal of our prayer: in liturgical celebrations, all prayers are addressed to the Father through Christ in the Spirit.

He came: to form a family, the family of the Rogate.

The Son Jesus gathers the Rogationists around the Eucharistic table to form a small family that would live on his flesh and blood with a precise objective and a specific purpose: to make it able to receive from his divine lips the imperative of the zeal that “devoured” his heart: *the Rogate ... infallible resource for the salvation of the Church and of society* (AP, p. 134). The Founder, in the *living on*, highlights the necessary condition to be able *to receive from his divine lips* the Rogate: to become “Eucharist”, in the dimensions of prayer (=orante), pasch of sacrifice, and charity.

From his lips: that of Jesus in the Eucharist is a living, palpitating, dynamic, and active presence. According to our Founder, the Rogationists must sit at the feet of Jesus the Master, like Mary of Bethany, to listen to him, to understand and acquire the mystery of the Rogate for the coming of the Kingdom.

The Rogate is a word that, from the depths of the Eucharistic Heart of Christ, passes on his lips and *from his lips*, as a vital breath, it is stored in the hearts of his children, who, through a truly Eucharistic life and guided by the Spirit, they carry out the specific vocational project. Not once, but many times the Founder repeats the same charismatic truth:

Each Rogationist receives from the adorable mouth of Jesus Christ that divine command that he should consider as coming from the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus: “Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam” (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

The purpose of our little Congregation is that of receiving from the adorable mouth of Jesus Christ Our Lord that divine word out of charity and the zeal of his most loving Heart: Rogate ... (Regolamento per la Congregazione Religiosa, April 24, 1901).

They must receive from the adorable lips of Jesus Christ Our Lord this divine command that came from the divine zeal of the Heart of Jesus, which contains a secret of the salvation of the Holy Church and of the Society (Draft of the Constitutions FDZ, November 6, 1912).

They receive, we could almost say, from the adorable lips of the

Divine Master these ardent words [Rogate, etc...]; if they intend to pierce through the depths (= viscera) of the spirit, into the deepest fibers of the heart; they belong totally to the divine Rogate if they have assimilated it as the hope of their existence in Jesus, in their longings for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls (AR, p. 670).

In the *Regulations of the Divine Superiors* no. 10, we can find a description of the vibrant scene where every Rogationist who comes into the world relives the Founder's charismatic experience. The words we read here seem to reproduce faithfully the “vision” of the historical encounter that Father Hannibal had with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of St. John of Malta. It is a detailed, vivid, lively, and vibrant description of particulars; reading it is like seeing it projected on a screen.

1/ He will see the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, divine superior, afflicted in the holy tabernacles due to the scarcity of both clergies²⁷,

2/ points out to him the two identical verses of the Gospel of Saint Luke (10:2) and Saint Matthew (9:37),

3/ shows him the abandoned souls like sheep without a shepherd,

4/ invites him to look at the vast and most extensive harvest, which perishes due to the lack of laborers and

5/ tells him: “Here is a rule [of life] that I, together with my Blessed Mother, as sweet, kind, and loving superiors, give you:

6/ do not grow weary of praying to the Lord of the harvest, who is I, and (pray to) my Father in my Name and (to) my Most Holy Mother,

7/ so that we may soon send many and holy laborers to the mystical harvest;

8/ and you strive to become such for my glory and the salvation of souls, in whatever condition of this religious life I will assign you (AR, p. 1012).

Father Hannibal brings the Rogationist before the tabernacle and, with the sequence of nine verbs that we find in the text, proposes to him the various moments of charismatic *lectio divina*. First of all, he calls into question the spirit of faith in the *Eucharistic mystery*. The faith that Father Hannibal demands must be so deep as to see Jesus Christ in the symbol of his infinite love, which is precisely his Heart, as if he were physically present: *He will see the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the divine superior*. In this framework, Jesus himself places the Gospel before the eyes of the Rogationist and *points out* the passages of the Rogate in the versions of Matthew and Luke, obviously to read them (*lectio*) and realize every element that makes up the scene (*explicatio*). Then through the *meditatio*, he

²⁷ EN: *Both clergies* means the diocesan and the religious clergy.

tries to fathom and assimilate the values and reasons that are proposed in the context of the passages. Then follows the *contemplatio* of everything that moves on the scene, starting with the people and their feelings and characteristics.

Let us briefly analyze the citation.

1. The *Eucharistic Heart* of Jesus, aside from being *the founder*, is also *the divine superior*.

The Rogationist cannot forget the charismatic testament left by the Founder, concerning the Eucharist: *He must know and retain now and in perpetuity that this Pious Work has for its true, effective, and immediate founder Jesus in the Sacrament* (AP, p. 272; Scritti, vol. 1, p. 111).

For this reason, among his many spiritual initiatives, on July 1, 1913, in Oria, after an intense preparation of the community, Father Hannibal wanted to give his disciples further reason to prove that the Institute of the Rogationists is truly a *Eucharistic Institute*, by proclaiming the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus as *Superior of the Rogationists*:

All present and future Rogationists will always retain, in conformity with the two proclamations, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and the Most Holy Virgin Immaculate as immediate, absolute, and effective superiors, who, although invisible, are always present in their midst. They will always see them visible in every order, command, and direction of those who have authority over them (AR, p. 1009; Scritti, vol. 60, n. 825).

Furthermore, Father Hannibal testifies that Jesus not only founds the works of the Rogate but remains in them with his dynamic presence and continues to care for his works. Indeed, he plants and cultivates them: *He came as a divine farmer to cultivate by his very self his little plant, in whose sprout buried underneath the soil of trial and mortification, is enclosed the small seed of his divine "Rogate"*.

The soil of trial and mortification: this soil is the Rogationist, who has to let himself be "trampled upon" by suffering and sacrifice to be fruitful and produce the most (cf. below, in 35).

2. ... *afflicted in the holy tabernacles due to the scarcity of both clergies ...*

We have repeatedly pointed out that Jesus in the Sacrament of the altar is in the glorious state, so he is not subject to mutations of feelings. However, the Founder invites us to imagine Jesus, still on the streets of Palestine, who, at the time described by Matthew and Luke, is *afflicted* with a heart swollen with *compassion*. He addresses the Rogationists, who remain before the tabernacle and, as in a vision - we are still in the stage of the *contemplatio* of the *lectio* - Jesus...

3. ... *shows him the abandoned souls as sheep without a shepherd and ...*

4. ... *invites him to look at the vast and most extensive harvest, which perishes due to the lack of laborers ...*

The souls and harvests of our time that need to be saved before they perish are many, so he asks for a collaboration that must qualify and govern the life of the Rogationist.

In fact,

5. ...he tells him: “Here is a rule [of life] that I, together with my Blessed Mother, as sweet, kind, and loving superiors, give you:

At this point, the *lectio divina* is brought to the next moment, that of *action*, proposed by Jesus himself:

6. *do not grow weary of praying to the Lord of the harvest, who is I, and (pray to) my Father in my Name and (to) my Most Holy Mother, so that we may soon send numerous and holy laborers to the mystical harvest.* The Evangelical Rogation, raised personally and communally to the Lord of the harvest, is the apostolic activity of absolute priority, which defines and specifies the Rogationist. It is the rule that governs the life of one who is consecrated to the Rogate, who cannot and must not *grow weary of praying*: his life becomes prayer. Jesus from the tabernacle wraps up the charismatic message by moving from action (*do not grow weary of praying*) to personal commitment:

7. ... *and you strive to become such for my glory and the salvation of souls, in whatever condition of this religious life I will assign you* (AR p. 1012). That symbolic pronoun *such* assumes great significance because it sums up all the characteristics that define the Rogationist at the highest level, just as Father Hannibal desires in asking the Lord of the harvest for *omnipotent vocations, most chosen souls, priests with zeal and charity [...]* *new most chosen apostles and souls of the highest level of sanctity* (AR, pp. 665-666; *Declarations and Promises*, XXI). Moreover, holiness:

82

a) is the *conditio sine qua non* in order to give glory to God and obtain the salvation of

b) makes the Evangelical Rogation acceptable to the Lord of the harvest (cf. below, in

If the Eucharist is the origin and the perennial spring of the life of those consecrated to the Rogate, the Rogationists have to find in it the existential form, which rules over all the demands of their being and the energy of their doing, at every moment and movement of their activities.

Aware of this reality, the Founder left various statements that we could define as articles of the “Eucharistic creed”. Let us read one among the most significant:

He [Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament] must always be, for us and for those who will come after us, in all our houses, our center, our life, our existence, our hope, our perseverance, our all (*Regolamento della Congregazione delle Figlie del Divino Zelo del Cuore di Gesù*, December 15, 1920).

Living the Eucharist must constitute for the Rogationist an inalienable interior need, a necessity of the spirit, a vital need. This is the essential condition to be able to represent the Christ of the Rogate in the Church and in the world.

Aware that the Rogate *is the command of the Divine zeal of his Heart* and that this zeal *devoured that divine Heart* (AP, p. 115), Father Hannibal, with his charismatic originality, takes care to place his spiritual children inside the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, a burning furnace of charity. In the *Supplica* of 1895, he addressed the divine Heart and said to him:

Most loving Heart of Jesus, our C Friend, (the title of 1895), we consecrate all of ourselves to you, all of this work [...] place this little seed in your sweetest Heart, and from this most loving Heart give life and existence to this Pious Work of your poor, ad maiorem consolationem Cordis tui, for the greater consolation of your Heart (Scritti, vol. 4, p. 37; AP, p. 266).

28. Rogationist apostles of the Rogate

The second dimension of the fourth vow of the Rogationists prescribes, as its purpose and obligation, *to spread this spirit of prayer everywhere and to promote vocations* (diffusive- promotional dimension). The Superior General, Fr. Giorgio Nalin, in the presentation of the final document of the X General Chapter, writes as follows:

*The X General Chapter, celebrated during the year of grace of the canonization of the Founder, has oriented the course of our religious family towards the relaunching of its charismatic mission at the start of the third millennium.*²⁸

The Rogate, an original and extraordinary charism - also in relation to the other founding charisms - was given by the Spirit to our holy Founder to transmit it, in its objectivity, to all members of the Mystical Body of Christ. All the faithful, whatever their state of life in the Church (laity, religious, clergymen), must pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest, a duty that responds to the first and essential dimension of the fourth vow of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal: “Rogate”.

83

28.1. Father Hannibal's teaching

Our Founder, in the letter addressed to Father Jordan, founder of the Salvatorians, writes:

This, more than a singular, unique mission, is still only in its beginnings. It must be extended and propagated because it cannot achieve the good effects it tends to if it is not spread. Therefore, it is necessary to organize in the field of the Institutes: a continuous, intelligent, active, fervent, industrious work, to spread this spirit of prayer throughout the world, to attract the attention of the peoples, of the faithful, of all the religious houses, of all the pious souls, and the secular clergy on this great command of Jesus Christ, so clear in the two Gospels, and yet so much hidden until now (MB III, p. 481-482).

In the same letter he prophetically adds:

How many things remain to be done for such a timely and fruitful promotion [...]? It would be necessary to form a magazine that would broaden knowledge about it, constitute centers in various cities to establish the Pious

²⁸ *Apostles of the Rogate. The mission of the Rogationists at the beginning of the third millennium*, Document of the X General Chapter, Rome, 2004.

Union, expand the Sacred Alliance to the two clergies, make new translations of the prayers, and spread them, and many other things quas continui in sinu meo, which I hold in my bosom! (MB III, p. 483).

Father Tusino testifies that *the heart of the Father overflowed with love and zeal for the diffusion of the divine command, and he was never satisfied* (AP, p. 114).

Ever attentive to the will of God and always docile to the enlightenment of the Spirit, our Founder was aware of having been called, consecrated, and sent to be an *apostle of the Rogate*. Like Paul, he claimed the divine origin of his vocation and the corresponding apostolate: *by command of God* (1 Tim 1:1), or *by the will of God* (Col 1:1). Therefore, he felt the diffusion of the Rogate was an obligation imposed by God himself. We can imagine that Father Hannibal, burning with the irrepressible desire to spread the Rogate, in reflecting on his mission in the Church, paraphrased Saint Paul several times, saying to himself: *Woe to me, if I did not preach the Rogate!*

And with the teaching and testimony, he sought to transmit to his disciples this charismatic responsibility.

Every Rogationist of the Heart of Jesus will do the best to make known this divine command, to spread this beneficial devotion (AR, p. 467).

These two communities are two centers or hearths, where the sacred fire of that divine Word - Rogate - is kept alive and from where pious promotion (=propaganda) starts and spreads (Letters, vol. 1, p. 396).

The perfection of the fourth vow not only commits them to this unceasing prayer but also obliges them to spread its spirit everywhere (PPA 1901).

Always keep the spirit of the Evangelical Prayer of the Heart of Jesus alive and burning, and spread it with all possible means (AR, p. 378).

In all his writings, the words “incessant”, “universal”, “unanimous” resonate with expressions that change, like a physiological repetitiveness, analogous to the breath of the living man. During the solemn liturgy of the canonization on May 16, 2004, John Paul II delivered the homily in which he reminds the Rogationists of the testament left by the holy Founder: *He left to the Rogationist Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal the task to do their utmost with all their strength so that prayer for vocations would be "unceasing and universal"*.

28.2. Father Hannibal, Apostle of the Rogate

I will unceasingly dedicate all my days and all my actions to this Prayer, also known as the Evangelical Rogation of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. I will have a great solicitude and zeal, according to the norms of our Constitutions, so that this divine command of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so little appreciated until now, would be known and fulfilled everywhere; so that in all the world, all the priests, secular and religious, all the Prelates of Holy Church up to the Supreme Pontiff, all the virgins consecrated to Jesus, all pious souls, all clerics and seminarians, all the poor and children, all, all will pray the Almighty God to send, without delay, innumerable and perfect laborers, either men or women, in the Priesthood and the Lay state, for the sanctification

and salvation of all souls, not even one left out. I will be ready, with the Lord's help, to make any sacrifice, even by giving my blood and my life, so that this Rogation would become universal (Declarations and Promises, XXI).

This citation, in which the all-inclusive adjective “all” is repeated eleven times, is a *declaration-testament* (clearly autobiographical) that must be signed by his disciples. For his part, our Founder put into practice all his gifts, his qualities, his culture, his zeal, so that the Evangelical Prayer would become a universal prayer, a unanimous and universal prayer of the Church.

Of the Church, that is, of all the people of God. This is the reason for the initiatives promoted by him, both the Sacred Priestly Alliance and the Pious Union of Evangelical Rogation, which progressed with outstanding results.

Personally, despite being almost alone, restricted by a thousand limitations, and without the wealth of the means of today's technology, Father Hannibal was surprisingly rich in initiatives to spread the Rogate. From the early years of his youth, with overwhelming and unstoppable enthusiasm, he began his charismatic apostolate.

1. a young man of twenty-four years, on March 13, 1875, he published the first article (= i.e., about the Rogate) in “The Catholic Word”, a weekly newspaper of the archdiocese of Messina.

2. In 1885, he published in Italian, French, English, Polish, Spanish, a booklet containing a long prayer to obtain good laborers.

3. To spread the Lord's command throughout the world (even after his death), he institutionalized the Rogate with the foundation of two religious Institutes: the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists.

4. In 1887, he instituted the *Sacred Priestly Alliance* to unite cardinals, bishops, priests, religious in this prayer.

5. In 1900, he established the *Pious Union of Evangelical Rogation [now UPV]* to spread this prayer among the faithful of all the local Churches.

6. He was present at Eucharistic Congresses with his unfailing interventions. Unable to participate in Rome in 1922, he wrote a booklet, *The Great Word*, distributed in thousands of copies by the Youth of Jesus Militia.

7. In 1907, he launched the magazine “God and Neighbor” to spread the Evangelical Prayer and the devotion to the “Bread of Saint Anthony”, reaching a circulation of more than 700,000 copies.

8. He endeavored a lot to insert into the Litanies of the Saints the verse: *Ut dignos ac sanctos operarios in messem tuam copiose mittere digneris, Te rogamus, audi nos. That you may send many holy laborers into your harvest. We ask you, hear our prayer.* He involved the participants in the Eucharistic congresses, cardinals, bishops, superiors of religious orders, to promote this petition in the Congregation of Rites, unfortunately, with negative results. However, during the audience of July 11, 1909, he obtained such grace directly from Pius X, though limited only to the Institutes of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

9. In addition, he instituted the *Sacred Alliance of Sympathizers (= Zelatrice)*, the *Sacred Alliance of Co-Founders and Co-Foundresses*; and finally, the *Heavenly Alliance*.

One of the censors of his writings stated:

He was so concerned with the need of the Church to have numerous and worthy laborers and the effectiveness of the evangelical remedy to obtain them so much so that, to realize it, he moved, so to say, heaven and earth. This [the Rogate] was the reason for his life, the dominant note of his writings, the characteristic of his work (PS, Report of Father Valentino Macca).

In 1923, Father Hannibal purchased a rotary machine, which, at that time, represented the pinnacle of technology in the field of the press, for the printing of the magazine “God and the Neighbor”. Today, for the diffusion of the Rogate, he would surely have provided his communities with more up-to-date media instruments and means. He would have promoted the systematic training of religious endowed with capacities for better management of those means. We can legitimately speculate all these, based on what he wrote to Father Jordan: *It is necessary to organize in the field of the Institutes: continuous, intelligent, active, fervent, diligent work, to spread this spirit of prayer throughout the world.*

But why was our Founder so fervently “obstinate” in it?

The reason is found in the purest faith of Father Hannibal who, docile to the enlightenment of the Spirit, thoroughly believed in the soteriological dimension of the Rogate, as understood from the following citations:

That word of Jesus Christ is a command with supreme importance, indeed an infallible resource for the salvation of the Church and society (AP, p. 115).

The Rogate contains the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls. In the propagation of this divine prayer, Satan sees the beginning of the downfall of his kingdom (Circular letter to the congregants, October 28, 1911).

86

On July 11, 1909, he wrote to Pope Pius X: *I have dedicated myself since my youth to this holy Word: Rogate ...* In the end, he left us an astounding declaration that must be accepted and signed by his disciples: *I will be ready, with the Lord’s help, to make any sacrifice, even by giving my blood and my life, so that this “Rogation” would become universal (Declarations and Promises, XXI).*

In his homily for the beatification (October 7, 1990), John Paul II stated: *The multitude of people not yet reached by the Gospel and the insufficient number of evangelizers were the torment of his heart as apostle and priest.*

This statement of John Paul II sketches the icon of Saint Hannibal urged and stirred up by the love of Christ for souls; the love poured out by the Spirit in the heart of the Founder with the gift of the Rogate, for which he was restless, and with all the means, he tried to announce to the people of God the Evangelical Prayer, *the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls.*

I will consider the Church of Jesus Christ as the vast field covered with the harvest, namely the people of the world... I will always consider how the great part of this harvest perishes for lack of laborers... I will feel my heart pierced by so much harm affecting particularly the tender harvest, which is the emerging generations. I will immerse myself in the intimate sorrows of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for such continuous and secular misery, reminding myself of the most holy Word of Jesus Christ: Rogate... I will hold

that... no remedy can be more efficacious and sovereign than this command given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ (Declarations and Promises, XXI).

28.3. The Church's Response

This charismatic dynamism was like a powerful trumpet blast, which brought God's people to their knees. John Paul II, in the homily delivered on the day, he proclaimed the holiness of Father Hannibal (May 16, 2004), affirmed: *From this providential intuition, a great movement of prayer for vocations rose up within the Church*

The Supreme
Pontiffs:

1. Pius X warmly welcomes the fact that many personalities of the ecclesiastical hierarchy responded to the initiative of the Founder, and he also unites his prayer with that of so many associates (cf. MB III, p. 314).
2. Benedict XV, who received our Founder in two private audiences and declared himself the *first Rogationist*.
3. Pius XI defined the Pious Union as the *work of works (= the greatest work)*.
4. Pius XII instituted in 1941 the Pontifical work for priestly vocations.
5. The Vatican Council II, in OT 2, recalling the responsibility of the bishops, priests, and all the faithful, writes:

The duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community [...] All priests especially are to manifest an apostolic zeal in fostering vocations [...]. Bishops, on the other hand, are to encourage their flock to promote vocations and should be concerned with coordinating all forces in a united effort to this end [...] The sacred synod commends first of all the traditional means of common efforts, such as urgent prayer...

87

It will be the Holy Father Paul VI who would make the evangelical Prayer universal, through the institution (1964) of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which is celebrated every year on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, solicited and remembered by an appealing message to pray as commanded by Jesus Christ. From the message of 1967, we can pick out some expressions that synthesize and echo the thought of the Founder:

... But in the meantime, all, yes, all the members of the people of God, heed our invitation and do at least one thing, do what Christ Himself commanded: "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest." It is obvious that prayer is an essential part of this divine "economy" (Paul VI, WDPV, March 5, 1967).

Is not this the first recommendation - the only one it seems - that the Lord left to his disciples in such a circumstance? (Paul VI, World Congress on Vocations, May 10, 1971).

Paul VI is confident that the problem of the crisis of vocations finds its solution in the

prayer commanded by Christ and in the witness of the priests.²⁹

In the apostolic letter *Summi Dei Verbum* of November 4, 1963, the same Pontiff wrote:

The first duty, then, that devolves on all Christians regarding priestly vocations is that of prayer, according to the precept of the Lord: "The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37-38). It is clearly indicated in these words of our divine Redeemer that the primary source of the priestly vocation is God himself, in his free and merciful will.

In the message of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations (May 2, 1971), the same Paul VI writes:

All the people of Christ should humbly ask God for that which God alone can give, praying, in keeping with the command of the Master, for the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Mt 9:38). All the people: but first of all, the priests and the religious themselves, by their example, zeal, and loyalty, on which the whole future of the Church hangs.

John Paul II, in the post-synodal exhortation PDV (1992), about prayer (no. 38) says: *The Church must accept every day the persuasive and demanding invitation of Jesus, who asks to "pray to the Lord of the harvest let him send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:38).* While, in the message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations of 1980,^{*} he writes that *as though in a world-wide Upper Room, in continuous prayer, together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Church, let this insistent prayer rise to heaven, to ask the Father what Christ wanted us to ask: laborers for his harvest.*

We can affirm that the supreme pontiffs accredit with their supreme authority the doctrine on the theological dimension and the supernatural nature of vocations, together with the corresponding necessity of prayer to obtain them. Our Holy Founder was its

²⁹ *The whole Church is examining this problem which, especially in certain regions, is exceptionally serious. [...] the first urgency is undoubtedly to sensitize the Christian people, the families, to the grandeur and the necessity of these vocations, to the esteem of the specific priesthood, demanded by the blossoming of the "baptismal priesthood" of the laity themselves. At the same time, an ardent prayer will be aroused for these vocations, "so that the Lord of the harvest may send laborers into his harvest" (cf. Mt 9:38). Is not this the first recommendation - the only one it seems - that the Lord left to his disciples in such a circumstance? The Holy Spirit will never refuse to a Christian people, generous and assiduous in such prayer, the pastors of which they really need: this must be a deep conviction for us. [...] The same Holy Spirit compels in us the duty to put to work all the pastoral resources capable of awakening young people to the priestly vocation, of helping them to recognize the call of the Lord and the needs of the Church, [...]*

Finally, [...] is it not up to the priests themselves to make the priesthood shine with a light which makes it desirable? Where the priest leads a truly evangelical life, drawing love, courage, and joy in a ministry exercised in deep union with Christ, this witness cannot long remain fruitless for vocations. Who does not see it, however? Any weakening of the priestly ideal, any hesitation about it, like any mediocrity of life and any dissension within the clergy, inevitably dries up its source.

Would this not be one of the dramas of the current crisis, which so many lay Christians are witnessing with pain?

But We have the firm conviction: with the help of God, with the support of so many generous priests, and with the prayers of so many faithful and consecrated souls, this crisis will be overcome. (Paul VI, World Congress on Vocations, Rome May 10-14, 1971)

^{*} EN: The citation is from the Message of the Pope for the World Day of Vocations in 1979, not in 1980.

prophet, evangelizer, and promoter with his writings and apostolic action. John Paul II declared him an *authentic forerunner and zealous Master of Modern vocation ministry* (October 7, 1990).³⁰

Currently, in vocational congresses and meetings at all levels, the prayer commanded by Jesus is considered a priority element, essential for obtaining vocations. On a practical level, in almost all parishes, at different times and in different ways, Eucharistic adorations are celebrated, and prayers are made for the same purpose.

28.4. The Rogationists and the diffusion of the Rogate, today**

The final document of the X Rogationist General Chapter (2004) deals precisely with the mission of the *Apostles of the Rogate* and begins with a text taken from John Paul II's message, dated June 26, 2004, addressed to the Superior General, Father Giorgio Nalin, on the occasion of the same Chapter. In this message, the Pope, at a certain point, addresses all the Rogationists with these words:

Dear Rogationists, the Church and the world expect of you renewed fidelity to the charism of the apostles of the "Rogate" that distinguishes you. Live the joy of your vocation, therefore, with all the passion that the Spirit kindles in your hearts and do not let the People of God and of all humanity be deprived of what the Redeemer himself asked for: "Rogate!"

After Father Hannibal's death, his disciples have committed themselves to the same mission following their Father and master. On January 26, 1938, in Trani, the magazine "Rogate ergo" began in a very humble way, and today it has reached a high level of specialization in the field of vocations and vocation ministry.

The process of deepening and spreading the Rogate has been truly remarkable since the General Chapter of 1968, with the institution of the *General Secretariat of the Rogate* in Rome, which is today the *International Rogate Vocation Center*.

The Center promotes studies and research on the subject of vocation. It is active in the field of religious publications with an average of twenty publications yearly and three magazines ("Rogate ergo", "Mondo Voc", "Cenacoli Voc"). Furthermore, it is working on the prospect of creating a Higher Institute for Vocation Ministry in Rome. In Brazil, it has already been operating in São Paulo and conducted at the *Rogate Vocation Center*.

The International Rogate Vocation Center published the *Biblical Dictionary of Vocation*, indeed an ambitious endeavor, which was presented at the headquarters of the "Vatican Radio" on October 30, 2007.

The studies on the Rogate and the zeal for the diffusion of the prayer for vocations signal a happy rhythm of acceleration, which proceeds with more and more enthusiasm, with the establishment of *Rogate Vocation Centers* in the various Circumscriptions of the Rogationists and of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, the publication of magazines and other social media that are carriers of our charismatic message: "Amico Rog", "Mondo Voc", "Rogate" in Brazil, "Vocations and Prayer" in the USA, "Rogate Ergo

³⁰ Cf. *Speech* to the pilgrims who attended the beatification, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

** EN: The Author wrote these notes in 2010. Since then, situations have changed, particularly in the Apostolate of the Rogate. Some works were reorganized or discontinued, while many new expressions have been initiated. It would be good to give an update of the situation in case this book will be used as a text in formation houses, such as the novitiate for example.

Asia” (*in the Philippines*), CDs, videotapes, audiotapes, etc.

In this context, the *Rogate Center of Spirituality* in Morlupo (Rome), the venue for ongoing formation and place of animation for the Rogationist laity, assumes particular importance. The Center, which also welcomes groups of religious, priests, and laity for various spiritual meetings, became a place of diffusion of the evangelical Rogation.

Every missionary presence of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal in various nations on the five continents constitutes a center of diffusion.

The Rogationists, who run schools and animate parishes, characterize their teaching and apostolate, promoting catechesis and prayer meetings, and establishing lay associations, which express in their lives and activities the charism of the Rogate.

In the charismatic dynamism carried out by the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, the document *Apostles of the Rogate* launches an appeal to all communities: *All Rogationist communities are called to a more significant insertion in diocesan programs with the specific richness of our charism* (AR, 39).

The Congregation is currently studying the commitment to relaunching the Rogationist Priestly Alliance in effective operational terms.

We can affirm that the Rogate is at the heart of the two religious Congregations founded by Father Hannibal. In fact, this charismatic dimension is present:

1. in all the final documents of the General Chapters of the two Congregations;
2. in the circular letters of the Superiors General;
3. in the magazines published by the General Postulation: “Padre Annibale oggi” and “ADIF”.*
4. in the publications promoted by the International Center: “Studi Rogazionisti”, “Quaderni di Studi Rogazionisti”, “In cammino”, in the magazines of the vocation centers of Circumscription, in the periodic publications of the (Anthonian) benefactors offices of the two Congregations;
5. furthermore, many Rogationists and Daughters of Divine Zeal choose research topics that are related to the charismatic *proprium* for their licentiate and doctoral dissertations;

6. On the first centenary of the Pious Union of the Evangelical Rogation of the Heart of Jesus (December 8-10, 2000), a Congress of studies on the Union of Prayer for Vocations was held at the Rogate Spirituality Center in Morlupo (Rome). Following the indications of that Congress, the Superior General, Fr. Giorgio Nalin, promulgated with a letter dated February 13, 2003, *an ad experimentum project for the organization and relaunch of the Union of Prayer for Vocations*.

For the best effectiveness of the apostolate of the diffusion of the Rogate, two conditions are necessary and essential: *Holiness and fraternal communion*, whose theological, Christological, and charismatic reasons we have already discussed above, in chap. 24.

Here, we only want to recall what has been affirmed in the apostolic exhortation

* EN: The current title of the magazine is *Sant’Annibale*

Christifideles Laici and the document of the X General Chapter (2004), *Apostles of the Rogate*.

Communion and mission are profoundly connected, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission, and mission is accomplished in communion. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) (CFL 32).

The Rogate, source of communion in the community, becomes the inspiring force of the apostolate. Consecrated and sent for the work of God, with the witness of life and with the proper apostolate of the Rogate, we express our mission by "zealously endeavor for [= zelare] the spirit of prayer for vocations and work for their promotion" (AdR 26).

28.5. The Missionaries of the Rogate

If our specific mission, at the ecclesial level, is the second dimension of the fourth vow, i.e., *to propagate the spirit of the prayer* commanded by Jesus, I believe that the current apostolate, through publications in the press and other media, is not enough. Our charismatic mission to spread the Rogate should reach the horizons envisioned by the Founder, who burned with the desire to see the evangelical Rogation become *unceasing, unanimous, and universal* within the Church. To achieve this goal, I believe that it is necessary to institute the figure and role of the *missionaries of the Rogate*,** who should contact bishops (on the reasons, cf. above, in 29). They will organize meetings with priests and seminarians of the dioceses, reach out to parishes, religious communities, schools, hospitals, families, with particular attention to the sick, adolescents, and young people.

Consequently, before providing suitable personnel for charitable Works, parishes, and others activities, the competent superior of Circumscriptions should set apart, for the work of diffusion of the Evangelical Rogation, religious of interior spirit, adequately prepared for this specific apostolate, intelligent, gifted, creative, who, following the example of our Founder, can "invent" effective initiatives to successfully spread the *Union of Prayer for Vocations* and the *Union of the Sacred Allies of the Rogate*. Naturally, the missionaries of the Rogate will be exclusively dedicated to their mission; therefore, there will not have other assignments either within or outside the community.

Let us not forget that the Rogationists are *the only ones in the Church*, to whom the Spirit entrusted the Rogate, *Word and Command of supreme importance* for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

29. Union of the Sacred Allies of the Rogate (U.S.A.R)*

** EN: This proposal of the Author should not be confused with the consecrated lay women who takes the same name in English (Missionaries of the Rogate) but are referred to as *Missionarie Rogazioniste* in Italian. The Author seems to envision them as those Rogationist religious who are totally dedicated to the spreading of the Rogate, the second dimension of the charism, through the UPV and PUPV.

* EN: The Author uses the term *Union of Sacred Allies of the Rogate* to refer to the "Sacred Alliance" (Sacra Alleanza) of prayer for vocations that St. Hannibal founded for bishops and priests in 1897. It is currently called

The reason behind this topic is also the need and urgency that the Congregation of the Rogationists feels as a serious duty to relaunch the USAR in the Church today.

The document of the X General Chapter (2004) *Apostles of the Rogate*, no. 36 reads: *The Rogationist Priestly Alliance, considering its historical and charismatic relevance in the present situations, requires a study in view of a timely relaunch.*

The General Government organized at the Rogate Spirituality Center in Morlupo on July 5, 2007, a study seminar on the theme *Rogationist Priestly Alliance: historical research and perspectives for the future*. The Acts were published by the Center for Rogationist Studies, in the formation journal *In Cammino*, special edition, Morlupo, July 5, 2007.

Father Antonio Fiorenza concludes the presentation of the Acts with these words:

The day of study, however, did not untie all the “knots” for a new and clear proposal in the contents that are pastorally significant today. [...] Therefore, we need another session of in-depth study, based on what emerged from the previous one, to clarify what is still unclear, not for an initiative of a relaunch.

The General and Provincial Chapters, as well as the current General Government, expressed interest in an effective relaunch of this initiative of the Holy Founder. This gives us the reason to hope that, with appropriate adaptation to the culture and sensibility of the various geographical areas, the USAR can find its due space and acceptance, in a historical moment, when we are witnessing an extraordinary flourishing of associations, unions, ecclesial movements at all levels. From the evangelical, charismatic, theological, and ecclesial point of view, the USAR is of fundamental importance for the coming of the Kingdom.

Furthermore, we should also highlight the frequent references to the evangelical passages of the Rogate, which the Holy Father Benedict XVI makes in his speeches, especially when addressing priests and religious. Everyone is also aware of the concerns and proposals of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, Card. Claudio Hummes, intended for a better and qualified presence and apostolic action of the clergy.

Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (PUPV) after the relaunch proposed by the X General Chapter of 2004.

Statute of the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations.

On the occasion of the Year of Priests proclaimed by Benedict XVI with letter dated June 16, 2009, the Superior General, Father Giorgio Nalin, on November 1, 2009, sent the Family of the Rogate the circular letter with the title *Priests according to the Heart of Christ*, in which he writes in no. 6: *“Moved by the zeal of the Rogationist vocation, we feel driven, during this year, to revive our charism that sees us, above all, engaged in prayer to the Lord of the harvest for the gift of holy priests and in the active diffusion of the spirit of this prayer. Precisely in carrying out the task of spreading the Rogate of Christ in the Church, I believe that it is extremely opportune to propose this year, as I said in the beginning, the relaunching of the Rogationist Priestly Alliance, through the publication of a renewed and updated Statute “ad experimentum”, which, to better underline its affinity with the Union of Prayer for Vocations, it is now called the “Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations”.*

See Appendix II for the most recent By-Laws (2014) approved by the then Superior General Fr. Angelo Mezzari.

29.1. The USAR is a divine revelation

The Founder states this especially in the *Preface to the Precious Adhesions* of 1919. The term *revelation* appears three times, with reference to the Gospel verses. This shows that the Lord's command is not only a revelation but also the *resource-idea*.

1. *We call it an evangelical revelation, a divine idea (understating it would not be humility) which averted and accompanied the poor Priest-starter* in the arduous undertaking.*

2. *These two passages from the Holy Gospels form a "great revelation."*

3. *I said that a happy resource-idea flashed in the mind of the Starter of the Pious Work, and it is the "daughter of the Evangelical Revelation", that is, of the spirit that had formed the daily prayer or rogation to obtain the good laborers for the Holy Church.*

Among the Founder's initiatives, the *resource-idea* to which he gave the name of the Sacred Alliance occupies one of the first places on the hierarchy of charismatic values; in fact, it is the *daughter of a great Word of the Gospel, of the evangelical revelation, of the Rogate*.

Precisely because it is "daughter" of the Rogate, it is valid for us to deduce that the Sacred Alliance is also of the same nature as the "mother", that is, an evangelical revelation, an initiative that is willed, brought about, and dictated by the Holy Spirit to Father Hannibal and, therefore, a reality that permeates all the dimensions of our charism, both from the ideological or practical point of view.

It seems to me that this is precisely the thought of the Founder, as understood from his writings.

In the circular letter that the Founder sent to the Congregants on October 28, 1911 (= LC: Letter to the Congregants), we read: *We should never neglect to always keep in mind that the immense good of these three "Sacred Alliances" has been granted to us by the Infinite Divine Goodness because of His Infinite Mercy and his infinite love.*

Father Hannibal affirms that the three Sacred Alliances** are a gift that comes down from above, a gesture of the infinite mercy of God. They are not the fruit of his intelligence. And he continues making a historical and wise analysis of the motivations.

The most gracious Heart of Jesus himself has placed us in the condition of being able to avail of such a great benefit, by having given us that sublime Word of the Divine Zeal of his Heart: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam" and having supplied us his most holy grace to dedicate ourselves to the Works of Christian Charity and assistance, gathering the abandoned little orphans for whom his beloved Heart longs so much, and helping the poor and the afflicted ones who are the constant object of the tender compassion and eternal Love of his sweetest Heart (LC).

* EN: St. Hannibal has always considered Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as *the true, immediate, and effective Founder* of the Congregations of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. Instead, he refers to himself as the *Priest-starter*.

** EN: The *three Sacred Alliances* were implicitly enumerated above in chapter 28.2, and the topic is further developed below, in chapter 29.8 and 29.10.

The Founder is sure that the Heart of Jesus himself, has placed him in the conditions to receive the treasure of the *Sacred Alliances* because he gave him the grace of the ‘great Word’. Having given him the Rogate, he could not help but also give him the Sacred Alliances, which represent a logical and necessary outcome for the propagation of the Rogate. A second motivation lies in the fact that, together with the Rogate, he received the understanding of the objective of this gift of the Spirit: that of the service of charity for the little ones and the poor.

But what have we done ourselves to deserve these three “Sacred Alliances”? We placed before you our unworthiness and misery (and mine, especially), which attracted toward us the compassionate gaze of the most merciful Jesus Christ our Lord and that of his most merciful Divine Mother (LC).

The Founder was fully aware of his unworthiness, of his “nothingness”, which could not utterly be at the origin of the resource-idea. At the same time, he recognizes that God turns his gaze towards the humble to do “great things”. And the association he makes with the gaze of his *most compassionate Mother* is significant, either because, in all the dynamism of the Spirit who has entrusted to him the charism, the Blessed Virgin Immaculate is always present, or because of a special echo to the words of Mary: *He has looked on the lowliness of his Servant.*

Someway, even the world and the devil are occasions to merit for such a unique good. The world presents itself in the form of neglect, abandonment, and criticism on the strenuous efforts which we exerted for many years to save the orphans and the poor, but nothing seemed to come to fruition. The world of the rich (apart from some exceptions) criticized and abandoned us, but this made the most loving Jesus be moved with so much pity on us and prepared for us the great gift of the three Sacred Alliances.

94

The infernal enemy also drew so much Mercy to our favor, because he realized that we are paying attention to that great and divine word: “Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam”, knowing that this most holy cause that contains the secret of the destruction of his kingdom, is united with the spiritual and temporal Charity of the neighbor, through which souls are snatched away from him. He is opposed to it and will continue to fight against this least Work with these two essential aims that rose in miseries and poverty, and almost from nothing, as it happens in the Works of God. Against this Work, he has not ceased and will not cease to break through its defenses (LC).

The bitter vicissitudes and hellish struggles unleashed by the world and by Satan, who wanted to destroy the Work of Father Hannibal since its birth, simply represent the “pains of childbirth” which would bring the USAR to birth. Better still, they are the historical mediations which the Holy Spirit used to make known to the Founder the whole truth of the exceptional charism. Therefore, *the great gift of the three Sacred Alliances*, which he received from the most loving Jesus, in a certain way, constitute as means to annihilate the diabolical fury of Satan.

The severe difficulties in which for seventeen years this “Pious Work of the Interests of the Heart of Jesus” found itself so oppressed, so anguished,

so persecuted, so troubled, were the occasional reasons which made it seemed humanly impossible for such great good to be able to form and progress (LC).

Amid the struggles that pressed hard from all sides, the Pious Work had many times reached the extremes. It seemed it had dissolved. [...] The present becomes increasingly difficult, intricate, discouraging. (PPA 1901 and 1904).

In all editions of the PPA, Father Hannibal mentions the tribulations, persecutions, and terrible internal and external struggles experienced in 1897 (the year of the institution of the Sacred Alliance), up to the point of fearing the end of the nascent Works.

At this point, the Spirit of God intervenes with the appropriate inspiration of the resource-idea, to overcome obstacles and problems which are humanly impossible to solve:

And behold, a beautiful idea, which we would call a resource-idea, suddenly flashed in the mind of the Priest-Starter: which, nevertheless, was itself the daughter of an even more excellent idea: the Word of the Gospel (PPA 1901 and 1904).

And our Supreme Good Jesus Christ our Lord, wanted to give us a remedy, and continuous help for the past, the present, and the future, so that the enemy would not prevail (as long as we are faithful to the Lord, as we always hope in Divine Grace, provided that there is our goodwill) and mercifully gave us the three "Sacred Alliances" which for us have been a source of Grace, help, Mercy, and Divine Providence, and a fortress of defense against the infernal enemy (LC).

95

We limit ourselves to emphasizing the present-past-future. This time horizon justifies the certainty that USAR is a constitutive initiative of our charism, which must be relaunched in the most appropriate ways today.

Father Hannibal says about USAR: *Considering this admirable spiritual treasure, we feel impelled to use all means not to lose it, always to keep it intact, to enhance it (PPA 1919).* If anyone has doubts about the opportunity to relaunch it or not, put before them these precise, authoritative, and unequivocal statements of the Founder.

Let us conclude this section with a further attestation of Father Hannibal that reiterates the conviction that it is of divine inspiration, through the effects, that he obtained by USAR.

The extremely beneficial effects that followed after the expansion of many spiritual benefices of the Holy Church, in favor of this small seed, were so many that it may well be supposed that the thought of invoking this supreme collaboration of prayers and blessings for the Pious Work and its components, more than just a simple idea, was a true inspiration from Heaven (PPA 1919).

29.2. What works does Father Hannibal want to save?

Before considering the nature and purposes of USAR, it is appropriate to ask ourselves: which of his works does the Founder intends to save with the request of the four favors?³¹

In the dramatic events that threatened his Works, Father Hannibal conceived the *resource-idea* and, with the deep spirit of faith and humility, launched an SOS for the salvation of his Works to those who knew the works of the Lord better than others: the bishops, priests, religious.

He had founded orphanages and, for their direction, after failed attempts with the Daughters of Charity, with the Daughters of Saint Anne, and the Bocconist Sisters of Palermo, he decided - *not without divine inspiration* - to found his religious Institutes: the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists.

I believe that through the Sacred Alliance, Father Hannibal did not intend to save, at least directly, neither the Work of Charities, nor the two religious Congregations, but, rather, the Rogate. This seems to me the thought of the Founder, as he reveals in the PPA of 1901: *But the word of the Gospel: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam, incessantly worried my thoughts, from the very beginnings of this Pious Work.*

The Rogate, and only the Rogate, was the “fixed-idea,” which continuously occupied and worried his mind. His whole self and everything in him was for the Rogate. At the summit and in the center was the Rogate. Everything revolved around the Rogate; the sovereign means that divine providence had offered him to satisfy his ardent desire to knock down the walls that enclosed the Avignone Quarter, with the *few orphans and few poor*, and reach the horizons of our planet for the salvation of all.

I thought: what are these few orphans who are saved, and these few poor who are evangelized, compared to the millions who get lost and lie abandoned like sheep without a shepherd? I looked at the limits of my meager strengths and the smallest extent of my capacities, and I looked for a way out. I found it wide, immense, in those adorable words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam” (PPA 1901).

With this predominant idea, I considered this Pious Institute, not so much as a simple work of Charity, which has the object of saving a few orphans and poor, but as one that has an even bigger and more extensive purpose, more directly aimed to the divine glory and the salvation of souls and for the good of the whole Church.

The purpose, therefore, is that of receiving from the most holy mouth of Jesus Christ the command of his Divine Heart expressed with those sweetest words: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam, and to carry it out with zeal in the best possible way, ad maiorem consolationem Cordis Jesu (PPA 1901).

³¹ 1st. That once a year, and without any obligation of conscience, they intend to apply the special fruit of a Holy Mass [...].

2nd. That in the daily celebration of Holy Mass with a habitual virtual intention, in the elevation of the Sacred Species, they intend to offer this Pious Work to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus ...

3rd. That, in imparting the Holy Blessing at the end of the Mass or in blessing their own dioceses, they intend to bless the Pious Work [...].

4th. That they intend to unite their intention to that of all the components of the Pious Work in the daily prayers that are raised in it to obtain from the Divine Mercy the chosen Ministers of the Lord (PPA 1919).

Father Hannibal certainly did not underestimate the works of charity in favor of abandoned orphans and the evangelization and assistance of the poor. However, he, who is the *true father of the orphans and the poor*, could not forget that the divine mercy had precisely entrusted the Rogate to the little ones and to the poor of the Avignone Quarter:

... it pleased the Divine Mercy, who looks at the little things in heaven and on earth, to entrust such a great treasure to this Pious Work of the poor and orphans. [...] The Divine Word: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam." [...]

It was up to the two small religious Communities that directed the male and female orphanages, to take into possession this sacred heritage of the Pious Work of the Poor of the Heart of Jesus. They are to be its depositaries and custodians, to form the center of this important religious tradition, to always keep burning and alive this hearth of zeal and prayer, and to become its propagators. [...]

Thus, in this Pious Work, the two small Religious Congregations have the fourth vow of daily prayer to obtain the good laborers for the Holy Church [...] (PPA 1901).

The Word and command of supreme importance, or rather, an infallible resource for the salvation of the Church and society, contains the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls. Father Hannibal could not allow that the place where the "hearth" of the Evangelical Prayer is always kept alive, would be destroyed by the fury of the devil, who sees in the prayer to obtain good laborers *the beginning of the downfall of his kingdom* (AP, p. 115).

Should we allow a Work that, besides saving souls, maybe the only one in the Holy Church, fulfills and enforces that great divine Command: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam to perish? How can we not be confident that the Most Holy Heart of Jesus will save us? (PPA 1919).

And he asks the Sacred Allies the *four spiritual favors*, not for the Works, but for the love of that divine command (PPA 1919), so that the hearth that was lit in the Avignone Quarter and left as an inheritance to his disciples would never be extinguished. They would have fulfilled their vocation to give light and warmth to the whole Church, and the first to draw from this luminous source of fire had to be and must be precisely the bishops, the priests, the religious. The *four spiritual favors*, therefore, were requested from the perspective of the perennial subsistence of the two Congregations, *according to the charism*.

When in our endeavors, everything goes through the air, there is no other consolation than resignation to the Divine Will, which makes everything right, even if we do not understand it. How much this resignation costs can be understood well by those who found themselves in such situations. But in my case, there was a circumstance that made this chalice even more bitter: that is, having to resign myself to seeing the germ of a Work consecrated for the holiest purpose of that heavenly Command: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam" dispersed; having to fold up this revered banner, in which shines one of the most tender expressions of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, and to which the salvation of souls can be connected through the shortest and

surest way (PPA 1901).

The revered banner was already in the hands of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. The Founder - who was amazed by the fact that for Saint Ignatius would have needed just a quarter of an hour to return to calm if he had seen the Society he founded destroyed (cf. AP, p. 179) - although with great sorrow, he would, at once, resign himself to seeing the end of his Institutes. However, he could not give himself peace to the thought that it would be the end of the Rogate (the only object of his love on earth), of which his spiritual children were the custodians and propagators.

The Sacred Allies, with their adherence, were called to contribute to the salvation of the *great Rogate*:

What does it cost the Sacred Prelates of the Holy Church to grant us these favors? Nothing, almost nothing, nor do they assume any obligation of conscience. But, in addition to the spiritual advantages that we give them, they will have great satisfaction and great merit before God, for having helped and sustained in this way, a Pious Work, maybe the only one, dedicated to that divine Prayer, which today, we have to admit, breaks free from the pages of the two Evangelists to echo in the heart of the Church, to shout in the ear of all Catholic cities, of all true believers and lovers of Jesus Christ, as the actual and most appropriate remedy needed for the growing desolation of the Holy Place! (PPA 1919).

Ultimately, the Founder asks the spiritual favors from the Sacred Allies: 1. *not* for the salvation of his works of charity, because all similar works present in the Church have the right to be saved; 2. *not* for the salvation of his religious Congregations as such, because it is the Holy Spirit who raises all religious institutes for the same purpose, that is, the building up of the mystical Body of Christ and the coming of his kingdom. It would have been, in a way, too selfish a claim, inconceivable in our holy Founder, who wants to save *the work of the interests of the Heart of Jesus, the work of Works (= the greatest of works)*. He wants to save the Rogate, which is the *charism of charisms (= the greatest of charisms)*, as intended to obtain from the Lord of the harvest good laborers for all dioceses of the Catholic Church, for all religious Congregations.

Are not the Sacred Prelates of the Holy Church also hoping, based on Faith, that the constant assiduous prayer made by many innocent souls, many poor children of Jesus Christ, many pious virgins to the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to Saint Joseph, to the Holy Apostles, would have to bear fruit for the benefit of their Dioceses and Seminaries? Could we admit that this Prayer would not have its effects? And why would our Lord Jesus Christ had so many times repeatedly insisted and recommended it (not only [by saying] dixit but dicebat)? (PPA 1919).

By granting the four spiritual favors, the Sacred Allies do it for their interests, the interests of their dioceses and their Institutes. Father Hannibal reiterated it in his letter to the servant of God, Fr. Francis Mary Jordan*, where he sees the Rogate not only as the

* EN: Blessed Fr. John Baptist Jordan (in religion, Francis Mary of the Cross) [1848-1918] is the founder of the Society of the Divine Savior or the Salvatorians. He was beatified in the Lateran Basilica in Rome on May 15, 2021.

charism of charisms but even prophetically sees it in an eschatological perspective. He writes, in fact, that the Evangelical Prayer is

a divine mission that contains within itself, as in a germ, the missions of all the religious Orders, somewhat of both the secular and religious Clergies, and it is the perfect preparation of the Apostles of the final times! My father, this prayer, which is cultivated and spread throughout the world, as Jesus Christ many times commanded - dicebat - will raise multitudes of Saints and Apostles on earth, because, if Jesus Christ commanded it, he would hear it! And if he revealed it today, after nineteen centuries, in these times when holiness seems extinct, it means that he set it aside for that new and divine holiness that must prepare the world for the coming of the Supreme Judge! (MB III, p. 481).

29.3. Without disregarding the charitable works

The fact that USAR aims to save the Rogate does not, in any way, disregard the existence and enduring nature of the Charitable Works. Father Hannibal is sure that, by saving the Rogate, the Charitable Works can also be saved. In effect, these are a legitimate and immediate consequence of the mission assumed with their fourth vow, and his disciples will not be able to do without taking care of the works of charity for the benefit of their neighbors.

The Founder also informs the Sacred Allies that by virtue of the fourth vow, the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal have the mission *to zeal** for the diffusion of the Rogate in the Church. This mission will be all the more perfect and effective the more his religious will commit themselves to charitable works, whose beneficiaries will have to learn obedience to the Lord's command. Therefore, charitable works are practically saved. And it will be precisely the Rogate that will be the *sure, ample, immense* means for the expansion of charitable works throughout the world.

Then, the legitimate consequence of the mission assumed with the fourth vow is that these two Religious Congregations have to take care of Works charity and assistance for the benefit of their neighbors. [...].

Furthermore, the perfection of their fourth vow not only commits them to this unceasing prayer but also obliges them to spread the spirit everywhere, which is best achieved by educating orphans and catechizing the poor, teaching them how desirable is the most desirable of all Graces, which is the obedience to the command of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, and to get them used to put it into practice? (PPA 1901).

* EN: *Zelare* literally means *to zeal*. This English edition translates it as *to zealously fulfill* or *to zealously engage in something*.

29.4. Union is the constituent element of the USAR

The Founder defines the Sacred Alliance with these words: *a union of faith, prayer, and blessings in the most magnificent work among all works of religion, in the divine sacrifice of the Holy Mass (Saggio di Preziose Adesioni, 1905).*

In truth, these that we call Adhesions of the Sacred Allies, are not reduced to the authorization of mere formality, but have so much in concrete and on the positive note: they are spiritual favors of great value; it is a union of faith, prayer, and blessings in the most magnificent work among all works of religion, in the divine sacrifice of the Holy Mass (Saggio di Preziose Adesioni, 1905).

A “spiritual Alliance” without spiritual union would be a *contradictio in terminis*. The Founder, first of all, invokes the Sacred Allies’ faith, a granite rock on which to build this “union” and essential condition to be “sacred” and give value and efficacy to prayer and to the Holy Mass itself. If faith is lacking, it is built on sand.

The above citations and, even more, those that immediately follow, make us understand that the Sacred Allies are such since all are spiritually united with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, in the same prayer and its propagation.

The Founder sees the *resource-idea* as an immense cenacle in which the Sacred Allies, together with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, form a single praying choir and at the same time a multitude of apostles committed in the evangelization of the Rogate.

In more than one citation, I wanted to underline and highlight the purpose of the USAR, which is not only to pray but also *to propagate* the Rogate to make the evangelical prayer universal to obtain vocations for the whole Church.

Of a Sacred Spiritual Alliance of the Episcopate and distinguished Prelates of the Holy Church and Dignitaries and Priests with the two nascent Institutes, to propagate such an important Prayer, and to achieve its divine effects. To spread increasingly such an advantageous and necessary Prayer, we have been addressing, for a few years now, the Prelates of the Holy Church, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, and Generals of Religious Orders, who are keenly interested in increasing the Catholic Priesthood. We humbly ask for nothing else but their participation of faith, prayer, and blessing for such an important cause. For this purpose, we implore out of kindness and mercy four spiritual favors:

1° That with the virtual intention they may spiritually join us in daily prayer, lifted to the Supreme God many times a day in these Institutes, by the Congregants, the innocent children, and by all the poor of the Heart of Jesus, to obtain from the Divine Mercy the good laborers for the Holy Church (Saggio di Preziose Adesioni, 1905).*

* EN: *Intenzione saltem virtuale* is translated into English as *virtual intention*. It is the intention that was once made and continues to influence the act now being done, but it is not present to the person's consciousness at the moment of performing the act. This kind of intention is sufficient for a human act to be voluntary and therefore morally responsible. Source: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=37121>

The fourth spiritual favor that Father Hannibal asks of the Sacred Allies consists precisely in this union:

That they would intend to unite their intention to the daily prayers that all the components of the Pious Work raise to obtain from the Divine Mercy the chosen Ministers of the Lord (PPA 1919).

In the *Saggio di Preziose Adesioni* of 1905, we read a further entry by Father Hannibal. He wants to make known the reasons for the publication of the Precious Adhesions: the propaganda (= campaign for a cause) and the spiritual union.

The first of these reasons refers to the vital Propaganda of the beneficial Prayer to obtain laborers for the Holy Church. The Bishops, Cardinals, Generals of Religious Orders, Priests, who grant us their spiritual favors, care about this vital Prayer, unite their intentions with ours, introduce it in their Dioceses and Seminaries, make special appreciations of that Evangelical Command.

Once again, the Founder, in the conclusion of the PPA of 1919, repeats more explicitly the double objective of the USAR, whose adherents contribute to keeping the flame of the *hearth* together with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. Knowingly, he underlines that this Union in faith and prayer will benefit not only his Congregations, but the entire Church, and in particular the Allies themselves:

The union of so many Sacred Allies in daily prayers to obtain good laborers for the Holy Church, will make this continuous Prayer effective and will draw out from the Most Holy Heart of Jesus the desired and long-awaited Ministers of the Sanctuary of which the Holy Church are so much in need today. The continuous blessings that they extend to us daily will shower the blessings of Heaven abundantly. Thus, the hearth in which the fire of this Prayer was lit, which lies almost forgotten in the Holy Gospels, will not diminish but will increase all the more every hour, with beneficial effects for the Holy Church and the Society in general, and themselves in particular. For them, we do not fail to offer an acceptable spiritual exchange, as mentioned above.

101

The Founder is happy to be able to see that the purpose he intended to achieve with the resource-idea has been largely achieved.

... many Bishops of Italy are not contented to have granted us the spiritual contribution of the annual Divine Mass and the prayers and daily blessings. They also wanted to join spiritually with this Pious Institute's daily prayers to obtain good laborers for the Holy Church. To this sublime end, they promised to direct all their good works and practices of piety, each subscribing to an analogous formula that I proposed to them (PPA 1901).

Various Bishops asked me for the prayer books to distribute in their dioceses, and especially in religious communities. But what matters most is that they introduced its recitation in their Seminaries (PPA 1919).

Indeed, it is comforting to see how this command of the Redeemer Jesus begins to be fulfilled! The Bishops take this important prayer seriously and spiritually join in the daily prayers of this Pious Institute to

obtain good laborers for the Holy Church. For this great purpose, they promised to direct all their good works and practices of piety (PPA 1919).

In the prayer that the Founder asked the Sacred Allies to pray daily, he thanks the Lord precisely for this union that had been established in the common prayer to obtain good laborers:

O Most Precious Heart of Jesus, we present to You our humble but fervent supplications for all the sacred Prelates. With so much charity, they grant us significant spiritual advantages and intentionally join us in daily prayer to obtain good laborers for the Holy Church (PPA 1901).

Indeed, it is not enough that all, bishops, priests, religious, and faithful pray with the same prayer commanded by Jesus Christ. It is only in our unity around the altar of his sacrifice that the aggregate energy of all develops into an infinite potential, which gives prayer an enormous power of intercession.

29.5. Who should pray and why?

The Sacred Allies are undoubtedly *spiritual benefactors* of the works of Father Hannibal, in a sense previously clarified. They are likewise benefactors at the economic level, although as a contingent and time-limited fact.

From some passages we read in the PPA (1919), it becomes evident that, regardless of their sustaining action in favor of the works of Father Hannibal, the bishops and clerics have to obey the command of Jesus Christ to obtain good laborers for the Church. Exactly being bishops, as such, their state of life demands obedience to the Rogate, and their specific vocation makes them its messengers. The Founder asks:

But who are those who must pray to obtain this Grace of graces (= the greatest grace), this Mercy of mercies (= the greatest mercy)? I think they are:

1° The bishops of the Holy Church and all the clergy; because Jesus Christ precisely said and repeated several times (dicebat) to the Apostles and the disciples: "Messis quidem fine, operarii autem pauci. Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam."

2° The Heads of the Religious Orders, because no less than the Bishops, they long for holy vocations for their Institutes.

3° All the faithful, because they all must understand that the greatest Mercy that the good God grants to a people, to a City, is precisely to send them chosen Priests [...].

4° In fourth place, the souls who are lovers of Jesus Christ and those who are zealous for his Glory: the Nuns, the Sisters of Congregations, the devotees who frequent Holy Communion, and anyone who wants to do something most pleasing to the most adorable Heart of Jesus who thirsts for souls! [...] (PPA, 1919).

In this universal choir, the bishops and all the clerics are the most interested in committing themselves to obey the divine command. In the rankings, Father Hannibal puts them in the first place for two main reasons:

1. because Jesus entrusted the command to pray to *the apostles* and, therefore, to their successors;
2. because they are shepherds of the flock.

In a letter he wrote to the bishops to involve them in the petition to the Holy See to grant the insertion of the Rogationist verse in the Litany of the Saints, he affirms:

Your Excellency, I would like to point out that Jesus Christ himself gave this command [the Rogate] to the teaching Church rather than to the learning Church, because “dicebat discipulis suis,” that is, to the Apostles. Therefore, it is the Church that should officially pray for this purpose [...]. It would be necessary, therefore, that the Episcopate petitions the Supreme Vicar of Jesus Christ referring to the same reason, that Jesus gave this command to the Holy teaching Church [...]. Would that all the Bishops implement this in their Dioceses! Then the prayer commanded by Jesus Christ Our Lord, as an infallible sovereign remedy to obtain priests according to the Heart of God, would become a “universal prayer” (Scritti, vol. 29, n. 451).

The Founder is convinced that, if all the bishops were to commit themselves to the evangelization of the Rogate, making the flock entrusted to them sensible and responsible, the evangelical Prayer (= *rogazione evangelica*) would effectively reach the horizons of the Catholic Church. This happy prospect, which makes Father Hannibal exult for joy, will be possible to the extent that all the bishops have the full and proper knowledge of USAR and make it a duty of conscience, being themselves the first.

103

Father Hannibal, in the PPA of 1919, still insists on this duty of bishops, given the need to have priests for the flock entrusted to them and the formation of seminarians. A lack of commitment would be to qualify them as unfaithful pastors!

The efficacious resource-idea, truly blessed by God, was as follows. That Priest thought this way: if there are people in the world who are more interested in that Divine Word: “Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam,” they are the Bishops. They particularly feel the need to have Priests sent by God, raised by the Holy Spirit himself. They have the Seminaries where they gather the clergy and strongly urge them that they become chosen Priests. They can never be so if all the means they use, all the fatigue, schools, and industries, are not joined with the unceasing Prayer commanded by Jesus Christ with his Divine Rogate (PPA 1919).

He reiterated the same thought in the PPA, in which he defines the bishops *living apostle of Jesus Christ*.

... the mission of unceasing prayer to implore Good Laborers to the Holy Church, is such that it should actively involve not only each faithful, each Christian who takes the good of souls seriously, but in a particular way the Bishops, the Shepherds of the mystical Flock, to whom the souls are entrusted, and who are the living Apostles of Jesus Christ. I said: no person in the world intensely feels the need of good evangelical laborers than the Bishops themselves.

29.6. The Eucharist, the heart of USAR

There is no USAR if there is no Eucharist. The alliance is a fundamental concept at the base of the theology of the Eucharist, where Christ not only realizes the covenant prefigured and announced by the prophets, but he is the new and eternal covenant sealed with his blood (Lk 22, 20; 1Co 11, 25), by which he introduced a new regime of grace for humanity.

The Eucharistic celebration is the privileged place of the presence of Christ, the true temple where Christians pray *in spirit and truth* and, altogether, a moment of grace with which God, in his beloved Son, perennially constitutes us as a people of the covenant.

In the letter mentioned above that the Founder writes to the Congregants on October 28, 1911, he affirms with determination that the idea of the USAR finds its reason in the value and effectiveness of the Holy Mass. He points, in effect, to the time and circumstance in which the inspiration of the resource-idea appeared in his mind, which, in an absolute and irrevocable way, is born and has its origin in the Holy Mass and derives its meaning and validity from it.

Being a “daughter” of the Rogate, it could not but otherwise revealed by Spirit it to the young Eucharistic Hannibal, in a Eucharistic environment, in a Eucharistic memorial.

In the LC, after recalling the difficulties that the work had experienced, he wrote:

So many afflictions mark the year 1898 (Sister Mary of the Cross, Melania of La Salette, the great servant of God and beloved of Most Holy Virgin was then in the female Institute of the Holy Spirit). The Priest-starter of the [Pious Work], had this thought like lightning in the darkness: if we implore and obtain spiritual aid or support of prayers and blessings, through the offering of the great Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, by the Bishops and Prelates of the Holy Church, as successors of the Holy Apostles, then limitations of the Pious Work would be somewhat compensated, and draw to it so much abundance of the divine graces that would save it from shipwreck and brought to the port of salvation (LC).

The subject is the Priest-starter and not Melania, as someone mistakenly read. We could see Melania’s presence as a providential circumstance. Being the Holy Mass, the heart and soul of the *resource-idea*, if Melania had had the *ray amidst the darkness*, we could speak of her as the foundress of the Sacred Alliance. But, this would simply be a historical error. However, we cannot disregard the beautiful Marian background in the Easter climate offered by the Blessed Virgin of La Salette. In this background, Father Hannibal projects the initiative of the USAR. The clause (*Melania...was then at the female institute*, etc.) is not casual but undoubtedly intended by the Founder, who enclosed it in brackets not to give it little importance but to make it more evident.

The Starter’s prevailing thought was the immense effectiveness of the Holy Mass celebrated primarily by such prominent figures in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and the beneficial efficacy of their blessings, all the more fruitful than those of the Holy Patriarchs of the Old Covenant. Nevertheless, from this great favor of Dignitaries, he did not want to exclude the simple Priests, having similar greatness and power of the Priesthood in one and the other [...].

Indeed, with a great expansion of soul, with singularly expressive and very encouraging letters, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, Generals of religious Orders, Dignitaries, simple Priests, adhered to our humble invitation: so, in a few years, a unique “Sacred Alliance” of Representatives of the highest Ecclesiastical Hierarchy was formed around this small Pious Work, consisting of a holiest collaboration of prayers and blessings in the most solemn act of our divine religion, which is the great sacrifice of the Altar (LC).

The spiritual favors that the Founder asks from the Sacred Allies all refer directly or indirectly to the Holy Mass:

I dared to try the most effective means of Faith, to attract the Divine Mercy in the formation of this Pious Work. Since the great Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, especially when offered by Bishops who are Successors of the Apostles, is the most effective means to obtain the Divine Mercy, so I thought of turning to Your Excellency, begging that you would grant me these three spiritual favors of great importance.

1) That, without assuming any obligation in conscience, you would apply once a year a Holy Mass for this Pious Work, that is, for its growth in the Lord.

2) That, in the daily celebration of the great Sacrifice, in the elevation of the Sacred Species, you intend to offer this Pious Work to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, with virtual intention.

3) That, at the end of the daily Holy Mass, in imparting the holy blessing to the people, you would intend to bless this Pious Work, and all its components, as if they were present there, with all their efforts, hopes, and desires that concern its formation in the Lord. And this also with virtual intention (PPA 1901).

105

Consistent with his assurance of faith in the Eucharist, the Founder informs the Sacred Allies about the undeniable commitment of catechesis on the Holy Mass, in his works:

... the teaching on the infinite value of the Holy Mass predominates in this Pious Work and everyone is educated to consider it as the center of divine wonders, as the most effective, indeed infallible means to obtain every grace, thus each day the Holy Mass is offered with the recitation of a special short prayer to obtain good Laborers for the Holy Church (PPA 1901).

... the offering of the Holy Mass obtains every Grace, that the Holy Mass is everything, that when the Divine Victim is immolated, the Heavens are opened, and the graces come down like rain (PPA 1919).

Father Hannibal is pleased when he affirmed that the Supreme Pontiff Pius X also enters the circle of spiritual union, blessing and offering the Rogationist works every day at Holy Mass.

... daily, He also offers these works to the Lord in the Holy Mass, extends to it all the blessings that he imparts, joins his divine prayers to ours for more perfect and profitable fulfillment of our most unique divine mission, which the ineffable divine Goodness has entrusted to us with those evangelical words: “Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam” (LC).

In the *Saggio di Preziose Adesioni* of 1905, the Founder, having confirmed his faith and confidence in the value of the Holy Mass, offers us the definition of the USAR:

In fact, in the most severe difficulties for the formation of these Institutes, we placed the highest trust in the prayers and blessings of the Holy Prelates of the Holy Church, and much more in the sublime offering of the Sacrifice of the Altar.[...]

In truth, these that we call Adhesions of the Sacred Allies, are not reduced to the authorization of mere formality, but have so much in concrete and on the positive note: they are spiritual favors of great value; it is a union of faith, prayer, and blessings in the most magnificent work among all works of religion, in the divine sacrifice of the Holy Mass (Saggio di Preziose Adesioni, 1905).

Here, oh dear children, is what the "Sacred Alliance" of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy with these least Institutes of the "Evangelical Prayer of the Heart of Jesus and the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus (LC).

Concluding this part, I think we can safely affirm that, in the Founder's intention, the USAR is not a union around the Institutes of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, but a union around the Eucharistic Christ along with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, united in prayer to obtain good laborers for the whole Church and every expression of the Church.

29.7. God's blessings on the greatest of works

106

We cannot remain indifferent to the request for "blessings" that our Founder asks from the Sacred Allies in favor of his works. He knew well the value of this ritual gesture with which God's blessing is invoked, especially in the Eucharistic celebration, where the covenant of communion with Jesus Christ and the faithful finds fulfillment:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17). Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (Eph 1:3).

It is Christ who fulfills the plan of salvation through the sacrifice of the cross, present in the celebration of the Eucharist, where every blessing comes to us in a downward movement from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

Father Hannibal declares his faith in blessings in the sense formulated in the *Prænotanda of the Blessings*:

When God blesses, either directly or through others, the Lord's help is always assured, his grace is announced, his fidelity to the covenant is proclaimed. When men bless, they praise God's goodness and proclaim his mercy (Prænotanda of Blessings, 6).

29.8. The USAR at 360 degrees

In the LC, after having explained to the congregants the meaning of the USAR, the Founder places the topic of the Rogate in a broader and deeper ecclesial perspective, which transcends the horizons of our planet. He continues:

... besides the “Sacred Alliance,” among the many “spiritual benefactors” of these least Institutes, I thought and partly realized two other “Sacred Alliances” one more precious and vital than the other [...].

I called the first one, “Sacred Alliance of Sympathizers (= Zelatrice)”. It consists of an invitation made not to Prelates of the Holy Church, but to simple Priests, who, upon acceptance, they become our “sacred allies” not only in granting us the four spiritual favors but by joining us more intimately and fraternally. They love this Pious Work as their own, commit themselves to help, accompany, and promote it in every way, not only spiritually, but also temporarily [...].

The second of these new “sacred alliances” that I thought of is all spiritual [...]. It consists in the most intimate, the most paternal, maternal or filial union with these pious Works, among people who are great living servants of God, who have particular union with God, chosen among the chosen souls, who have a reputation for holiness and transmit the sacred perfume, whether they are Priests or not, or sacred Virgins, or evangelical laborers, or founders or founders of other holy Works, or victims of penances and spiritual sufferings [...]. A special invitation is made to them, [...] to become, more than sacred allies, “co-founders or co-foundresses” of these least institutes.

107

Finally:

... today, pushing myself more and more on the ladder of these ascents of the search for divine help, I seem to lift from Earth to Heaven! After the “Sacred Alliance of the Prelates of the Holy Church,” after that idea of the “Sacred Alliance of Sympathizers,” after having started that of the Lord’s servants, the “Co-founders, and Co-foundresses,” what else could not be thought of on this Earth?

I do not know, but I do know that another “Most Holy Alliance” more beautiful, more sublime than all the others, flashed in my mind; that is, a heavenly Alliance of “Co-Founders, Sympathizers, and Protectors.” [...]

And full of hope, I conceived the thought that, if [...] we turn to the saints of the triumphant Church, to the heavenly Hierarchy, to humbly and ardently implore their “heavenly Alliance;” if we go to the glorified Souls of those who in this life were either Holy Pontiffs, or Holy Founders, or Holy Priests of the one and the other Clergy, or Religious Saints, or even simply saints in any state who are dear to God, it would be impossible not to achieve such heavenly Alliance.

It would be impossible for such elect Companions, invited by us, not to give us their fullest support.

Having summoned those on earth, Father Hannibal also invites those in heaven to concede their adhesion to the USAR, around the altar of the Lord. What else does the Founder

intend to do with this 360-degree extension of the Sacred Alliance, except to realize in faith, hope, and charity, the truth of the Eucharistic mystery in the terms expressed by the purest theology?

In the Conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, we read:

Christ indeed always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified, and men are sanctified. The Church is His beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father.

Moreover:

The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church, which is the Body of Christ, participates in the offering of its Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire (CCC 1368).

The offering of Christ is united not only the members still here on earth, but also by those already in the glory of heaven. In communion with and commemorating the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, the Church offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In the Eucharist, the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united to the offering and to the intercession of Christ (CCC 1370).

Who knows if Father Hannibal had in mind the scene of the heavenly liturgy when he elaborated the USAR in his thought, where the crowd sings the praises of *Him who sits on the throne*:

He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Rev 5: 7-8).

108

The Doctrine is proposed again by John Paul II:

It is not by chance that the Eastern Anaphoras and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honor Mary, the ever-Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the angels, the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs, and all the saints. This is an aspect of the Eucharist which merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly "liturgy" and become part of that great multitude which cries out: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:10). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey (EdE, 19).

The elders have glasses, filled with perfume, in their hands, which are the prayers of the saints, collected and offered in universal homage to God the Father, the goal of our prayer, with the mediation of the immolated Lamb. This heavenly and ineffable spectacle represents the subordinate function of intercession that the saints have in paradise, following the example of Jesus Christ, the only mediator.

The many prayers with which our Founder asked the intercession of the saints for the triumph of the Rogate, reveals his feeling of being in full communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles, the martyrs, the angels, and all the saints, especially in celebration of the

one sole Eucharist.

This is the reason why he could not but also involve in the USAR the citizens of the heavenly homeland because their understanding the Rogate is much more superior than they could have when they were on this earth. He writes in fact:

Indeed, we are more confident that the higher the interest that the new heavenly Allies will take of us and of these Works, the greater the knowledge that they have in God of the importance of the great Rogate of the propagation of such beneficial Prayer and its unfailing effects (LC).

Father Hannibal writes a regulation of the *only heavenly-bound Rogationist Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus* composed of 15 articles, of which I quote some passages:

Art. 1. The “heavenly-bound Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus” refers to a Congregation consisting of the “heavenly” and the “wayfarers” that is, composting of members of the “Triumphant” Church and the “militant” Church. [...]

Art. 8. [...] Then, all, including the traveling congregants and the Companions will unite themselves through the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the sweetest Heart of Jesus who longs and desire for the salvation of souls, when at night on the mountain he said: “Rogate ergo, etc.” This magnificent Union in the Most Holy Eucharist: “the Mass”!

Art. 9. The only immediate Supreme Superior of the unique “heavenly-bound” Congregation is the Adorable Heart of Jesus, especially in the great Mystery of his Infinite Love: the Most Holy Eucharist who will be considered as the true Founder. The immediate supreme Superior General etc. is the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate under every title, who will be regarded as the true Foundress. Their only Vice Regent will be the Patriarch St. Joseph, who will be considered as the true Co-founder (Scritti estesi, vol. 3, n. 1568).

109

29.9. Christ identifies himself with his Rogate

Rogate Dominum messis is the person of Jesus and we can also say of the whole Church (cf. John Paul II, Message to the Rogationists).

John Paul II, in his message to the participants in the Rogationist General Chapter, on July 28, 1986,³² with happy intuition, he pierces through the depths of the Rogate, revealing its

³² “*Rogate Dominum messis*”! In these words of Jesus, in the Latin language, is the foundation, the source of your spiritual unity, of your Religious Community, of your Congregation.

It is not a figure, but above all a Word: “*Rogate Dominum messis*”; it is the whole figure, a person, that of Jesus, and we can say the whole person of the Church.

These are profoundly ecclesiological words.

The Church lives by prayer, lives by the prayer of Jesus, by his own Rogate, and seeks to share the very Rogate of the Son of God. Thus, it builds itself up, grows, and becomes the Mystical Body of Christ.

And, as rightly said by your Superior General, at the center and at the top of this Rogate of Christ and of the Church, in Christ, there is always the Eucharist.

I wish that our Eucharist, today, as the highest expression of the Rogate of Christ and of the Church, be fruitful

Christological and ecclesiological dimensions which qualify our charism and exalt its objective transcendence.

In this intervention, with a daring, fascinating, and not easily interpreted perspective, he presents the Eucharistic Christ, who identifies himself with his Rogate, the identification that involves his mystical Body.

By involving the Church, the *Christ of the Rogate and prayer (= rogation)*, he, the *absolute Rogationist*, presents himself for imitation not only by the Rogationists but also by the bishops and priests, as successors to the apostles, to whom he gave the command of the Rogate.

For this reason, the message is like a beacon that casts an intense light on the subject we are dealing with, because in it, we also find the most profound Christological terms of the USAR.

Here are some statements from the text:

1. *Rogate Dominum messis, is the whole figure, a person, that of Jesus, and we can say the whole person of the Church.*

2. *The Church lives by prayer, lives by the prayer of Christ, by his own Rogate, and seeks to share in the very Rogate of the Son of God. In this way, the Church is formed, grows, and becomes the Mystical Body of Christ.*

3. *The Eucharist, today, as the highest expression of the Rogate of Christ and of the Church.*

Considering the context of the message and for that fact that it is addressed to the Rogationists, the word Rogate is not to be understood in a general sense, which is valid for all prayers, and also for the prayer commanded by Christ to obtain good laborers, but it refers exclusively to the Rogate of the gospel passages that inspires the charism of the Rogationists. The whole message moves along the charismatic horizon, according to the understanding of Father Hannibal.

The Holy Father affirms that *in this word: "Rogate Dominum messis" there is the whole figure, a person, that of Jesus*. Above all, in this declaration of the Pope, the term "Rogate" cannot mean the command that the Lord gives to the disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest but represents the mystery of the praying person (= *persona orante*) of Jesus himself.

In his message, the Rogate is undoubtedly a command; but the command that Jesus receives from the Father, as stated in the document of the VII General Chapter (1986) *Rogationist Communion and Community*, no. 24:

The Son entering the world says: "Here I come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10, 7); he obeys the Father's will expressed in the Rogate, and he is the incarnated response to this will. [...] [The Rogate], uttered by the Father for the salvation of men, is accepted by the Son who fulfills it by assuming our humanity lived in the Spirit.

for you Rogationists, for your General Chapter, for the further growths of your Congregation in the spirit of your Founder, to whom you always refer. It is an essential reference because this belongs to the same substance of the different Religious Congregations: to live continuing the charism of the Founders. So, I wish you every good during this assembly, the General Chapter, and the further growth of your religious community in its spiritual growth and in its charismatic ministry in the Church of Christ.

The Pope's thought coincides with that of our document: Before being the one who commands the Rogate, Jesus Christ is the one who prays the Rogate. In the dialectic of the message, the Rogate of Christ is not the imperative, but the response to the imperative; that is, the “prayer of Christ” or “the Christ of the prayer” (= *Cristo del Rogate* o *Cristo della rogazione*).

The praying Jesus (= *Gesù orante*), based on Heb 10: 7, manifests the true ontological context of the mystery of his existence and his intrinsic tension of obedience to fully satisfy the demands of the will of the Father who wants all men to be saved, through the historical and ministerial mediation of collaborators, which the Incarnate Word asks of the heavenly Father (the one who calls), offering himself in the sacrifice of the cross.

The document of the General Chapter of 1986 refers to the passage of a sermon on July 1, where the Founder highlights the infinite availability of the Word:

The Son adheres to the divine Rogationist imperative assuming the form of a servant with the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "Here I am, send me" (Sermonettes of July 1, in Scritti, vol. 54, p. 51).

Since Christ's is an existential prayer, not made with words, but with the offering of one's life:

1. The prayer (= *rogare*) of Christ and his person are a perfect equivalence, for which,
2. Christ identifies himself with his prayer (= *rogare*).

Since the *prayer* of Jesus reaches the absolute summit in the *mysterium eucharisticum* that makes the *mysterium paschale* present on the altar (cf. EdE 2), rightly, John Paul II can affirm that the *Eucharist is the highest expression of the Rogate of Christ*.

111

29.10. The Church recognizes herself in the Christ of Rogate

In the expression, *Rogate Dominum messis*, John Paul II, recognizes not only the person of Jesus but the *whole person of the Church*, the *Christus totus*. In other words, the *Rogate Dominum messis* is a constitutive element of the mystical Body of Christ; hence, it *seeks to share in this very Rogate of the Son of God*. Consequently, all members let themselves be involved “by” and “in” the prayer (= *rogare*) of the Eucharistic Christ.

The level, degree, and depth of this conformation-identification with the Christ of the Rogate vary, obviously, according to the state of life and the personal vocation of each one.

By the sacrament of Orders that they received, the bishops and priests reach the insuperable and highest possible summit on earth of the approximation to the person of Christ, who entrusted to the apostles and their successors his powers, mission, and harvest, through the three imperatives: “do” - “go” - “pray.”

Jesus commanded only to His disciples:

1. *Do this in remembrance of me* (Lk 22:19).
2. *As the Father has sent me, even so, I send you* (Jn 20:21). *Go* (Mt 28:19).
3. *Then he said to his disciples: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”* (Mt 9: 37-38).

The three commands are extremely connected by the single plan of salvation, which Christ carried out, and which before his ascension to the right of the Father, handed over to the apostles and their successors. They are appointed to continue his same work, to spread out and prolong the saving humanity of Jesus Christ in a dimension that exceeds time.

These three imperatives establish a mysterious but real and effective union that binds Christ to the bishops and priests, predestined to *conform to the image of his Son* in a mysterious and original way, incomprehensible to the human mind.

Therefore, the three imperatives “do” - “go” - “pray” have the same specific weight, a single soteriological objective: the building of the Church, the coming of the kingdom. They demand the same obedience from ministers of the Eucharist, of the Word, and of the Rogate, committing themselves in the same title and in equal measure, by the obvious essential interconnection existing between the Eucharist, the Word, and the Rogate.

The bishops and priests, as much as they cannot remain neutral before the “do” and the “go” commands with which Christ entrusts to them his sacramental Body and his Word, so they cannot remain indifferent to the imperative: “pray” with which he entrusts to them his sheep and his ripe and abandoned harvest.

In the message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in 1984, John Paul II defines prayer to obtain good laborers as a *command that challenges our faith and touches our conscience as baptized*. Obviously, the bishops and priests are the first to be challenged and to feel their conscience enkindled by this imperative.

We realize why our Holy Founder has put in to play all his potentials, expressed in the inspiration he received from the Spirit, and in the ecclesial plan of the *resource-idea*.

Let us attempt to confront the affirmations of John Paul II: the Church *seeks to share in this very Rogate of the Son of God and the Eucharist, it is the highest expression of the Rogate of Christ*, with the nature and definition of the USAR dictated by Father Hannibal: *a union of faith, prayer, and blessings in the most excellent work of all works of religion, in the divine sacrifice of Holy Mass*.

When the Pope says that the Church *seeks to share in the very Rogate of the Son of God*, does he not mean that the Church, the whole Church, all the members of the Mystical Body, must become part of the Rogate of Jesus Christ?

Father Hannibal sees the same Church and analyzes it by making that kind of hierarchy that we read in chapter 29.5: “Who must pray and why?”

And precisely the reason for the resource-idea lies in this hierarchy. Indeed, both the Founder and John Paul II agree that the whole Church must gather around the Eucharistic Christ *to share in this very Rogate of the Son of God*; in effect, the Eucharist *is the highest expression of the Rogate of Christ*.

The Founder puts the bishops and priests, recipients of the USAR, at the top of the hierarchy for two reasons:

1. because they and they alone are the ministers of the Eucharist: without priests, there is no Eucharist;
2. because, as shepherds of the flock and stewards of the harvest, they feel the duty and the urgency to spread the Rogate.

I start by saying that the word “prayer” in these notes always refers to the Rogate of Christ. In my opinion, the expression of John Paul II “to share” coincides with that of the

Founder's "union of faith." In fact, both expressions mean that the members of the Mystical Body must be united to Christ-head in prayer. Indeed, *Christ always associates the Church, his beloved Bride, with Himself in this great work* (SC 7).

So that our prayer will be acceptable to the Heavenly Father, it has to be "deified"; and to be "deified," it must echo in the temple of Christ's humanity because only through him can we enter into dialogue with the Father.

It is the truth expressed in the *Institutio generalis* of the Liturgy of the Hours, no. 7, which contains the famous text of Saint Augustine:

... It is the one Savior of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, who prays for us, prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our priest; he prays in us as our head; he is prayed to by us as our God. Let us recognize, therefore, our voice in him and his voice in us.

Christ is the mediator, the subject, and the object of prayer. As a mediator, he prays for us; as a subject, he is the one praying who unites the Church to himself, making himself present in those who are united in his name; then, he is directly invoked by us as God.

In the definition of the USAR, the expression "union of faith" should be extended to the whole praying Church (= *Chiesa orante*) "in" and "with" Christ, who in the Eucharist is present in the glorious state. He is at the right hand of the Father *because he always lives to intercede in our favor* (Heb 7:25). Thus, He is not the prisoner of the tabernacles but is with the angels and the whole heavenly court.

When celebrating the Eucharist, the Sacred Ally must see with the eyes of faith the visible presence of the participating assembly and the invisible - but equally real - presence of the heavenly Jerusalem, around the one altar.

113

This was the faith of Father Hannibal, who wanted to add to the three Sacred Alliances on earth *a heavenly Alliance of Zealous Co-Founders and Protectors*.

29.11. Rogate – Priesthood - Eucharist

Another affirmation by John Paul II surprises us and leads us to reflect on the relationship that exists between the Rogate, the priesthood, and the Eucharist: *The Church lives by prayer, lives by the prayer of Jesus, by its own Rogate, and seeks to share the very Rogate of the Son of God. Thus, it builds itself up, grows, and becomes the mystical body of Christ.*

With these declarations, John Paul II repeats the same sequence of verbal terms (*lives, builds, grows, becomes* the mystical Body of Christ), which we find in the encyclical EdE and establishes an essential relationship between the Rogate and the Eucharist.

The ground for the relationship between the Eucharist and the Rogate is found in a third term: the priesthood. In fact:

- the priest is the causative principle (obviously secondary, subordinate, instrumental) of the Eucharist;
- The Rogate, by the will of Christ, is the causative principle of the priest, who is obtained through the prayer commanded by Jesus.

A sequence and an ascending movement are thus established: Rogate-priesthood-Eucharist. In fact:

1. Without the Rogate, there are no priests.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, with those words, wanted to show that the salvation of this mystical harvest of souls is his Priests. But to obtain this inestimable good, it is necessary to ask it from the Most High Owner who is God Himself. He wanted to instruct us that his Priests do not arise by chance, they do not form themselves, they cannot be formed by human effort: instead, they come from the Divine Mercy, which creates them, which generates them, which gives them to the world; and that, if we do not pray to have them, we will not obtain them! (PPA 1919).

2. Without priests, there can be no Eucharist.

One cannot conceive the Eucharist without the priesthood; there is no Royal Priesthood without the Eucharist [...]. They are and will be inseparable from each other (MB III, p. 309).

There is no priesthood without the Eucharist. There is no Eucharistic sacrifice without a priesthood (John Paul II, Angelus, June 1, 1997).

Not because it had to be this way, but because in the current economy of salvation, God wanted it this way. The Lord wants ministers of the New Covenant (cf. 2 Cor 3:6) who, without being mediators, are "servants" of the only mediation of Christ.

3. Without the Eucharist, there can be no Church.

The Church draws her life from the Eucharist (EdE 1).

The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed, and by him she is enlightened (EdE 6).

The Church is built through sacramental communion with the Son of God who was sacrificed for our sake (EdE 21).

The celebration of the Eucharistic is the center of process of the Church's growth (EdE 21).

According to Father Hannibal, *Jesus Christ in Sacrament is the life of the Church* (MB III, p. 310). In the understanding of Father Hannibal and John Paul II, the Eucharist, the Priesthood, and the Rogate are interdependent, correlative, inseparable terms that are founded on a dynamic unity.

John Paul II affirms: *If the Eucharist is the center and summit of the life of the Church, it is likewise the center and summit the priestly ministry* (EdE 31). Hence, it is legitimate to deduce: if the Eucharist and the priesthood are the center and summit of the life of the Church, in a certain way, the Rogate is also the center and summit of the life of the Church because without the Rogate there are no priests, and without priests, there is no Church.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch affirms it:

Similarly, all should respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, just as all should regard the bishop as the image of the Father, and the priests as God's senate and the college of apostles. Without these three orders, you cannot begin to speak of a Church (Office of the Readings, 2nd reading, Tuesday XXVII week in Ordinary Time).

In order to make it understood that apostles and successors are necessary in the mystery and the history of salvation, at the supreme moment of his life, *Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father* (Jn 13: 1), in the great priestly discourse addressed to the apostles during the Last Supper in which he instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, he uses the allegory of the vine and the branches, which applies to all Christians; however, the priests are involved in it in the firsthand, because Jesus said it in a priestly environment and addressed primarily and specifically to the apostles.

The words of Jesus: *I am the vine, you the branches*, spoken in the dramatic climate of the Upper Room, just a few hours before leaving this earth, acquire a particular meaning, because they express the project of God who desires the salvation of men by means of the collaboration of men.

The branches are attached to the vine and are an integral part of it: there is no true vine without branches, just as there cannot be branches without the vine. If the vine is necessary for the branches, also the branches are necessary to the vine, because they are the ones that bear the fruit until it is fully ripe. Similarly, we can affirm the mutual need of Jesus and the disciples, in the present economy of salvation.

30. The Heavenly Rogationists

115

Among the “spiritual industries” that our Founder devised, I believe that of the *heavenly Rogationists* can be inserted into the charismatic horizon of the *resource-idea*.

Father Tusino writes:

He strove to seek vocations for his two Congregations to make the Rogate triumph in the world; but then he thought: the triumph of the Rogate concerns the saints in heaven not less but even more than we do. Thus, they will protect the Congregations which are consecrated to the Rogate, by obtaining for them numerous vocations, and at the same time praying that the Lord sends laborers to the Holy Church. For this, they are neither more nor less than the Rogationists and Daughters of Heavenly Zeal (AP, p. 411).

In a letter to Father Vitale, Father Hannibal writes:

It is understandable that for now, we proclaim those heavenly ones who we honor with our devotion, those whom we love, admire, and invoke, etc. ... with the sure belief that they would be pleased to become Rogationists and Daughters of Divine Zeal. In short, they are our heavenly congregants! In time, the heavenly vocations will undoubtedly increase! (AP, p. 412).

They will certainly grow, not only because of the other proclamations, but also because, along with our Holy Founder, there are also his disciples: the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal, who left this earth to join him in Paradise, and as well as the ever-growing members of the *Heavenly Alliance*.

Following Father Hannibal's teaching, the liturgical calendar of the Rogationists recommends, when it is allowed, to celebrate the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours in honor of the heavenly Rogationist, whose memory we remember. If this initiative falls within the tradition of the Congregation, I think it would be good to update it.

31. To be good laborers

To be good laborers is the third dimension of the fourth vow, which in the current Constitutions³³ it is expressed this way:

To direct daily all that constitutes the manifold apostolic activity of the Congregation to the goals of the Rogate. This means: to be good laborers for the coming of God's kingdom, by working for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the neighbor – following the example and teaching of Father Founder – in the education and sanctification of children and the youth, especially the poor and the abandoned, and in the evangelization, human promotion, and help of the poor (Constitutions of 1998, art. 63.3).

The scene of the Exodus is a constant event in the history of salvation:

Then the Lord said: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them [...] So now, go! I am sending you..." (Ex 3:7 ff.)

God chose to rely on men. Father Hannibal writes:

What were these places before? and what are they now? Many years ago, human hands built these little houses for the poor to inhabit, and the poor lived in them; and this place became like a small village of poor people. Then, the Most High God casts his eyes on this place, because He does not look at the grand palaces of the rich, but looks at the shanties of the poor (Scritti, vol. 54, p. 4).

Hannibal, *an admirable minister of Jesus' compassion for the crowds (Preface of the Mass of Saint Hannibal)*, goes, sees, meets with misery, intervenes. Like Moses, docile to the enlightenment of the Spirit, he consecrates his life, his belongings, the wealth of his spiritual

³³ EN: The Author cites the article in the 1998 Constitutions, which was then in vigor at the time of the writing. In the current 2010 Constitutions, the third dimension of the fourth vow is in art. 29, paragraph 3, which states:

Following the footsteps of St. Hannibal, we are compelled to a particular pastoral charity and to the untiring and paternal gift of our whole self to the little ones of the Kingdom. In the works of spiritual and temporal charity towards the neighbor, we find the legitimate and immediate consequence of the mission we assumed with the vow of the Rogate. We dedicate ourselves to the human, social, and religious promotion of the boys and youths, especially poor and needy, to educate them in the faith and prepare them professionally. We commit ourselves to take care of the human promotion and evangelization of the poor, and we commit ourselves to bring the message of the Rogate to all peoples (ad Gentes).

and intellectual gifts - which could have given him brilliant prospects in his historical future - for the release from the material, physical, moral and social slavery of the abandoned crowd of the Avignone Quarter.

31.1. Relationship between the Rogate and Charitable Work

Before considering the specific apostolate of the Rogationists - charity at the service of the little ones and the poor - it is useful to make some brief considerations on the relationship between the Rogate and the Charities willed by the Founder. Father Tusino writes:

Ideally and historically, the apostolate of the care of orphans in the Father's life is linked to his Rogationist mission. [...]

We also know from the Father how the Works, in their origin, were historically tied to the Rogate. When he went in the midst of the mob of Avignone Quarter, he remembered the gospel scene of the wandering crowds without a shepherd, the Lord's groans for the plentiful harvest which gets lost, and the divine command: Rogate ergo... "From then on," he says, "I committed myself, with my meager strengths, in the spiritual and temporal relief of that abandoned crowd" (AP, p. 606; Scritti, NI vol. 10, p. 207).

The historical fact attested by the Founder is also referred to by Father Tusino with the following words: *We also know from the Father how the Works, in their origin, were historically tied to the Rogate* is confirmed in the Regulations written by Father Hannibal for the "Poor girls of the Sacred Heart of Jesus". Initially, the Founder decided to found the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, then, later, that of the Rogationists, for the running of orphanages. In March 1887, the first four girls entered the novitiate. Some months earlier (perhaps in January or February), he wrote the first Regulation for the nascent female Congregation, which would assume the running of the orphanages. It does not contain disciplinary norms, or educational plans, or something similar. There is no mention of orphanage and orphans. It is articulated exclusively on the charism of the Rogate. So much so that it is a document of extreme theological and charismatic importance, one of the most beautiful pages written by the Founder on the Rogate. The first Regulation, which also contains disciplinary articles, was written on April 29, 1887.

Our most noble uniform, "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam", while on the one hand commits us to a continuous prayer to ask the God of mercies for good laborers to the Holy Church, on the other hand, it also obliges us to the works of charity that, with the divine help, we can feebly carry out. So far, these Works are two: the education and salvation of abandoned orphans, and the evangelization and help of the most miserable and destitute poor. These are two holy missions that we must attend with great transport of Faith and Love (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

The following citation highlights the incalculable disproportion that exists between the few orphans that are saved and the few poor that are evangelized with the millions that are lost. Father Hannibal goes beyond the small boundaries of the Avignone Quarter and, with his faith and charity, extends his gaze toward the vast world of men that God wants all to save, and

offers his availability. But, aware of the *limits of his very meager strengths*, he looks for a way out and finds it *wide, immense in those adorable words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam," which is the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls.* In fact, he writes:

I thought: what are these few orphans who are saved, and these few poor who are evangelized, compared to the millions who get lost and lie abandoned like sheep without a shepherd? I looked at the limits of my meager strengths and the smallest extent of my capacities, and I looked for a way out. I found it wide, immense, in those adorable words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam. Then, I seemed to have found the secret of all good works and the salvation of all souls (AP, pp. 139-140).

The Daughters of Divine Zeal and Rogationists cannot ignore the connection between the Rogate and Works and the related constitutional obligation, repeatedly emphasized with force by Father Hannibal.

The sacred and expressive name of Daughters of Divine Zeal obliges us to zeal for whatever interest of the Divine Heart of Jesus, any charitable work, zeal being the fervor of charity. Similarly, the distinctive character of zelatrix of that divine command: Rogate ergo, obliges us, as much as possible, with divine grace and with all the efforts of goodwill, to be good and active laborers ourselves in the vast field of the mystical harvest, in all kinds of holy spiritual and temporal endeavors, to win souls to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, for his greatest glory and infinite consolation (Regolamento per le Figlie del Divino Zelo del Cuore di Gesù, December 15, 1920).

118

When charity, in the vertical dimension of man's communion with God reaches the maximum level, either individually or in the community, extraordinarily intense pressure is unleashed (zeal: fervor of charity) from the heart of a charitable man. A convinced faith and sincere love cannot remain repressed, but they tend to open and manifest themselves in collaboration with Christ for the salvation of men.

The Founder deduces from the *incarnation* of the charism in the life of his disciples another undeniable reason which establishes the natural and inseparable connection between the Rogate and Works of Charity. As we have said elsewhere (cf. above, in 10), the charism reaches the depths of being, engaging the existence of the consecrated person. It is the inspiring and dynamic principle that presides over the religious life and apostolic works of the Institute (cf. General Chapter of 1980, *Documents and Decrees*, 94).

Therefore, the Rogationist has to act according to his identity, which is the one shared by the Christ of the Rogate, who not only implores and commands to pray but at the same time *performs works of charity*, as a good worker consecrated and sent by the Father (cf. Acts 10:38).

Father Hannibal highlights the absurd inconsistency that would result if his spiritual children would reduce their being Rogationists to only praying to obtain the good laborers. Indeed, the ten words that make up the decalogue of those consecrated to the Rogate contain a term that, before being attributed to those who are the object of their specific prayer, must be applied to themselves, as laborers *ready to offer themselves to any work charity*.

... the two Institutes of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal do not remain in carrying out in themselves the saving command, nor are they limited only to the normative implication of the prayer "ut Dominus messis mittat

operarios.” Instead, they apply to themselves two other meanings, which should be interpreted in the broadest sense of the word of God, recognizing in it an infinite extension of significances. The more it is contemplated, the better it is appreciated by them and by others.

And these are the first two practical and compelling meanings. The first arises from the word “operarios.” What is this first compelling meaning? It is this: finding ourselves committed to every syllable of this mystical decalogue (that is to say, the ten words with which it is composed: Rogate - ergo - Dominum - messis - ut - mittat - operarios - in - messem - suam), we should be ashamed to ask His Divine Majesty, and the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, for good laborers of the mystical harvest of souls, if we ourselves of the two Institutes did not strive with all the strength of soul, heart, mind, and body, with divine help and with all goodwill and right intention, to be good laborers ourselves in the mystical harvest of souls. Those divine words with which we ask laborers for the immense harvest of souls, keep us ready to serve, although always limited, but with divine assistance, for whatever work of charity, both spiritual and corporal, to which the endeavors of those who belong to the two Institutes of the Heart of Jesus can reach out (AR, p. 671).

In another text, Father Hannibal repeats the same concept. He connects our mission with the obligation that comes from the vow of the Rogate, of which it is *a legitimate and immediate consequence*, and also suggests the formula to be implemented so that this imperative that comes from the vow can have the best effectiveness. In fact, he says:

Then, as a legitimate and immediate consequence of the mission assumed with the fourth vow, these two Congregations would have to take care of the works of charity and assistance to their neighbors. Forasmuch they pray incessantly to obtain the good laborers for the Holy Church, if they are to obey the desire of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, expressed in that divine command, they must strive, as far as human limits allow, to be themselves good laborers. Furthermore, the perfection of their fourth vow not only commits them to this unceasing prayer but also obliges them to spread this spirit everywhere, which is best achieved by educating orphans and catechizing the poor, teaching them how desirable is the most desirable of all Graces, which is the obedience to the command of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, and to get them used to put it into practice (PPA 1901).

119

The Founder affirms that the effectiveness of the constitutional duty to spread the Rogate is directly proportional to the Rogationists’ commitment to the mission of *educating orphans, catechizing the poor, and teaching them* the Evangelical Prayer, according to the program that the Founder himself has established and has carried out since the beginning of his mission in the Avignone Quarter.

From the above citation, it can be deduced that the apostolate of charity, although *not specifically* but only *consequentially* (cf. above, in 21), fully enters into the charismatic area to the point of constituting its *conditio sine qua non* for our Evangelical Rogation be effective. Furthermore, Father Hannibal wants to emphasize that his spiritual children cannot dare to ask the Lord of the harvest for good laborers if they remain idle and do not recognize and act as a consequence of the golden thread that unites the three dimensions in an essential unity, which are strictly connected and objectively related among themselves: *evangelical prayer (= rogazione evangelica), zeal for the spread of the Rogate, and apostolate of charity.*

That the charitable works *enter into the specific mission* of the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists is also understood by the fact that the Founder did not limit this apostolate to the period of his life on earth, but projected it to a future without limits, through the foundation of the two Congregations. He says:

The continuity of any work of charity preoccupied my thoughts; it was one of the main goals of my poor efforts. It was necessary to form a community of sisters to achieve this objective of no little importance. Not being able to have either the Daughters of Charity or the Daughters of Saint Anne, I thought of forming the Daughters of Divine Zeal (Speech to the Aristocracy Committee of Messina, August 20, 1906).

Unfortunately, no one is indeed a prophet in his homeland. But, more than the criticism of the present, I was more afraid of what will happen in the future. I feared rather that, tomorrow, after my death, this orphanage would fail; and then a just blame would be hurled against my memory, because I was incapable of making this orphanage of salvation for the poor and orphaned girls stable and lasting (Speech to the Aristocracy Committee of Messina, August 20, 1906).

31.2. Obligatory status of the apostolate of charity

In chapter 21, we found out that between the praying dimension (i.e. to obtain good laborers) and the apostolic dimension (i.e. to do the charitable works, although these do not identify us as Rogationists, cf. chap. 21.1.), *concerning the charism and the vow*, there is a relationship of equality: they reach the same level and have the same binding force.

Father Hannibal firmly affirms that zeal for the praying dimension must also find its expression in the apostolate of charity in favor of the little ones and the poor:

Let us, therefore, take great care of abandoned orphans [...] here it is essential to consider that we must ensure to extend this zeal to all the tender and young souls, whether they are orphans or not (AR, p. 288).

To distinguish them or prefer one and neglect the other would be to violate or even destroy the charism and vow. Our Founder dedicated his existence to the fulfillment of the two charismatic spheres: the evangelical Rogation and charity. He affirms: “*I dedicated myself from my youth to that holy word of the Gospel: Rogate etc.,*” and “*even if they do not identify us as Rogationists (cf. chap. 21), from my youth I devoted myself to this single purpose, that is, to alleviate the misery of the people*” (AP, p. 491). We can find the first citation in the letter addressed to Pius X, dated July 11, 1909, the second, in the speech to the Charitable Committee of Taormina.

We conclude this paragraph with a remarkable statement by Father Valentino Macca, who admirably described the charismatic features of our Founder and which strongly highlights Father Hannibal’s deep conviction about the essential interconnection between the Rogate and charity:

From the very first moment he understood his vocation as Founder, the Servant of God did not doubt that “the Rogate and charity” were two essential elements of the same reality. Indeed, while charity towards God and neighbor is the reason for Father Hannibal’s life, the prayer for vocations commanded by Jesus Christ was understood and valued by him as the supreme means for

31.3. Apostolate of the orphans: reasons and hypotheses of the choice

Father Tusino writes: *The Servant of God was distinguished by charity towards his neighbor, but among this neighbor, his most tender heartbeats were for the orphans, especially of both parents* (AP, p. 606).

Why among many activities and charitable expressions did the Founder choose and institutionalize the orphanages? We need to distinguish:

1. *The burning desire to reach everyone.*

In Father Hannibal's *Writings*, the expression *salvation of souls* is one of the most frequent; it has an impressive repetitiveness index, together with the *glory of God*. It constitutes the fundamental and all-encompassing reason of his being and doing: *I will nourish in my heart the ardent desire for the salvation of all the children of the world* (*Declarations and Promises*, III).

To those who receive the Rogationist vocation from the Spirit and want to enter the Congregation he founded, Father Hannibal makes them sign a formal declaration, by which they attest, in an unconditionally definite way, the correlation between the Rogate and works of charity, as well as the ardent desire to make charity all-extensive for the universal salvation of men, through the Rogate.

I declare that from these precepts of charity, I have formed the goal of my entire priestly ministry and religious life in this Institute. Therefore, I promise that, under the guidance of holy obedience, I shall not spare myself in anything for the spiritual and temporal well-being of my neighbor. To possibly extend this charity to all the world, to embrace intentionally and universally the greater spiritual and temporal benefits of my present and future neighbors, I will consider the Evangelical Rogation of the Heart of Jesus as the most efficacious means, which forms the special mission of this Pious Institute (*Declarations and Promises*, IV).

2. *The concrete choices*

The concrete choices obviously could not reach the boundless utopian horizons of the torment that burned in his heart. He acted with prudence and wisdom. He had to take account of a thousand conditions inside and outside the Works. Finally, he turned his attention, love, efforts, sufferings, everything he had and everything he was to the abandoned little ones. In my opinion, there are two main reasons:

- a) A first reason could be attributed to the psychic structure of the Founder, who became orphaned at the age of fifteen months. The mother (a widow of barely twenty-three years old) was forced to entrust him to an old, unsociable, hysterical aunt, who was always shut in environments without air and light, which filled the child's head with tales and horrifying images of ferocious beasts. This bitter

experience engendered in Hannibal a keen sensibility, finesse, and tenderness towards the little ones. However, the choice of orphanages was not a kind of vindication of the historical situation in which he found himself as a child - although this experience played its providential role at the level of mediation -, but a *reason of supernatural order, an absolutely charismatic choice*, that is, dictated by the Spirit. We must not forget that the understanding of the charism also extends to its mission.

- b) The second reason is pedagogical and formative. Father Hannibal founded the orphanages, not to remove the little ones from the family, but to give them the family they did not have; to pluck them out of the mud (cf. AP, p. 606), understood as all aspects toxic to the person, in the physical and moral dimension. The principal motivation, in the absolute sense, is salvation.

We come now, blessed children in Jesus Christ, to discuss the orphanages, that is to say, the great mission that we have assumed to gather lost, poor, abandoned orphaned children of both sexes, to rescue them from losing their soul and body. In the most tender age, we remove them from abandonment, from the perversity of a wicked world, from hunger, from extreme misery, from destructive idleness, from scandals and constant dangers, from temporal and eternal ruins! Oh, how pleasing it is to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus this work of salvation of the abandoned orphans! What a gain of the soul would this ever be: snatch them away from the devil and give them to God! (Treatise of the Orphanages, Taormina, January 26, 1926, in Scritti, vol. 2, n. 1520).

The salvation of abandoned orphans will be one of the favorite works of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus. They will guide the orphans with paternal and affectionate care for their sound education and suitable instruction, providing them with what they need, especially in case of illness. They will consider the last of the orphans as the first of the Fathers (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

Since this Pious Work is dedicated to the salvation of children, I will strive, insofar as Holy Obedience allows me, with every effort for the good of intern and extern children. In my heart, I will ardently desire the salvation of all the children of the world, and I will ask for it with ardent prayers to the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Saving the tender children is holiest among all holy works. Therefore, we will look after them with every sacrifice and, filled with a spirit of intelligence, we do the highest good by plucking the children from wandering, from dangers, from perversion, in order to lead them to education and instruction to make of them good Christians, perfect Catholics, honest and hard-working citizens, and one day, good parents, if God so destine them (Draft Constitutions of the Rogationists, March 22, 1906).

The children who are educated in the Christian way will live a good and holy life (AP, p. 606).

These passages contain a summary of the aims, ways, and means, which were extensively developed by Father Hannibal in the regulations he wrote. They lay down the

commitment that must animate the Rogationist educator, whose action is aimed at the full realization of the person, to offer the children the possibility of harmonious growth. In these notes, there is not even room for the synthesis of a Rogationist pedagogy. We can only highlight some elements that constitute and characterize it.

Educational action must be:

a. *Religious*: the student must understand, interiorize, and live the principles of faith to tread the historical path and reach the destination for which he was created.

b. *Essential* and *existential*: the child must build his existence through essential and indispensable elements, love, solidarity, work, dignity, autonomy.

c. *Individual*: each child has potentials, natural gifts, possible environmental, psychic, and character conditionings.

d. *Finalized*: the child must understand the fundamental importance of the ultimate goal, which must guide the intermediate goals that historical situations will offer him.

e. *Cordial*: expressed with sincere and impartial love, the educator must be able to make the child perceive that he is truly in his heart.

f. *Intelligent* and *attentive*: capable of entering the heart of the child, of discerning and adopting the most appropriate interventions in the given moment.

g. *Respectful*: the Rogationist educator must take to the supernatural level the maxim of the poet Giovenale: *máxima debetur puero reverentia*. [*The child deserves the highest respect*].

h. Above all, *exemplary*: Father Hannibal said that the educator must be a perfect model, kind, exemplary, but firm in his decisions.

123

31.4. The Orphanages do not exclude other types of charitable works

The Founder's choice to institutionalize orphanages does not exclude other types of charitable works. The desire to help all those in need, with every possible means, through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, had a 360-degree opening. Unfortunately, the limitations and historical conditions in which the Founder found himself did not allow him to actualize the plans of good works that the love of God and neighbor inspired him: he had to face the lack of collaborators, means, and places. But his perspectives were quite different: *The salvation of abandoned orphans will be one of the favorite works of the Rogationists* (AP, p. 607). *So far, these Works are two: the education and salvation of abandoned orphans, and the evangelization and help of the most miserable and destitute poor* (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

... the Daughters of Divine Zeal, according to the possibility - which depends first of all on the number of sisters suitable in every respect and for the different works - can open orphanages, preferably nurseries for children, shelters for the poor, hospitals, arts and trade schools, and any foundation of charity for interns or externs, boarding schools, retirement homes, schools at different levels, with primary, secondary or high schools (Regolamento per le Figlie del Divino Zelo del Cuore di Gesù, December 15, 1920).

31.5. Apostolate of assistance and evangelization of the poor*

Even if this type of apostolate is not standardized, each community has always come, more or less generously, to the aid of the poor either by means of food, money, or direct service of Rogationists religious who, following the example of the Founder, work in environments where poverty is overtaken by misery, like that of the Avignone Quarter.

In the Philippines, in Manila, *the Inserted Community of Pasay*, made up of a group of young religious lives in the squatter areas, trying to help the needs of those unfortunate people marginalized by the society. In Cebu, the Rogationists built the *Avignone Clinic* to provide medical assistance to the poor of the area.

In Brazil, in São Paulo, the Rogationists started the *Albergue Zancone*, open all day for about 150 poor people who find food, sleeping areas, and medical assistance there. In the *favelas* of the same city, they offer all possible services to the marginalized. In Curitiba, there is the *Obra Social San Aníbal* (OSSA). In addition to the assistance of children and adolescents, the Rogationists have set up the *Casa da Paz*, a multifunctional center for meetings and financial support for about a hundred poor people. In Passos, the *Centro Padre José Leo* assists approximately one hundred people. Presidente Jânio Quadros has a Human Promotion Center for more than six hundred people.

Also, in the USA in Sanger, the Rogationists opened the *Hannibal House*, where Mexican migrants find food and clothing; in Van Nuys, the *SERV Center* develops welfare activities for the poor.

In Africa, in Nyanza, in the *St. Antoine Social Center*, the *Mwigira Ubwoba* program provides support and training to some sixty families with children suffering from AIDS.

In Albania, in Shënkoll, a polymedic outpatient clinic treats the most indigent. In Poland, in Warsaw, there is a daily soup kitchen (except Sunday) for the poor.

In recent years, various communities have put up the soup kitchen for the poor: in Messina, the *Christ the King Institute* offers a lunch for more than sixty poor people every day, and these days, some areas are being renovated to set up toilets and shower rooms, and sleeping quarters; the *Mother House* provides dinner for more than ninety poor people every day; in Rome, the *Istituto Antoniano* serves food three times a week to about two hundred and eighty poor people. In these soup kitchens, the Religious are assisted by volunteers.

In Desenzano del Garda, about thirty poor people receive food every day; in Padua, there is a temporary shelter for about ten homeless people.

31.6. The Constitutions and the tradition

Since its first edition in 1926 to the latest one in 1998,* the Constitutions have always confirmed and established in the vows the Founder's fundamental intention concerning the apostolate of charity in service to the little ones and the poor.

* EN: The Author wrote these notes in 2010. Since then, situations have changed. Some works were reorganized or discontinued, while many new expressions of the apostolate of charity by the Rogationists have been introduced. It would be good to give an update of the situation in case this book will be used as a text in formation houses, such as the novitiate for example.

* EN: The Constitutions currently in force is that of the 2010 edition. The apostolate of charity is placed in the section dedicated to the Mission, in arts. 69-72.

The history of the Congregation, since the beginning, attests to the understanding and acceptance that the Congregation has had of the apostolate of charity according to the intentions of the Founder. This service was offered with absolute constancy, without interruption, even in the most challenging times of the two World Wars, despite the risks, dangers, and serious difficulties. The General and Provincial Chapters, the circular letters of the Superiors General, the Norms, Ratio, study conferences, educational projects, programs of the Circumscriptions, the sacrifice expressed even in difficult situations by religious educators, the care in the selection and formation of lay collaborators, and the millions of money spent for upgrading the structures – all these are proofs that the apostolate of charity is a constitutional and essential commitment of our charism.

31.7. Faithfulness to charitable works

The constitutional and charismatic commitment of our specific charitable mission must be faithfully safeguarded and perpetually carried out, with a dynamism that respects the original spirit and intentions of Father Hannibal and the magisterium of the Church: *The works need to be renewed and revitalized. But this must be done while remaining faithful to the approved apostolate of the institute and in collaboration with the respective ecclesiastical authorities* (EE 25).

Material fidelity alone to the works of the past, rather than to the original intentions of the Founder, fossilizes these Works and creates a risky indifference and discouragement among those working in the field. The charism is a living and fluid reality. It reaches out, opens, and is embodied in ever-new perspectives and situations, which demand our commitment to update and require the spirit of creativity and boldness in the prudent search for initiatives. Structures, instruments, programs, activities, typologies need to be reworked based on cultures, laws, and historical conditions. Therefore, they are subject to changes and adaptations, which should be in compliance with the regulations in force in the countries where we operate, and insofar as they do not prohibit us from expressing our service according to the religious principles and pedagogical methods left to us by Father Hannibal and tested in time.

The General Chapter of 1980 suggests abandoning places and Works, as a last resort, that is, in the absolute impossibility of expressing our service of charity in faithfulness to the constitutional “spirit.”

In planning its works, may the Congregation allow itself to be guided by evangelical freedom of spirit; may it also be willing to leave places and works, which no longer respond to the original decision. On the other hand, may it be always ready to offer its contribution in the field of educational assistance in other places or countries, where it seems to be more needed and urgent (Apostolate, n. 60).

Currently, concerning the apostolate of assistance and education for the needy little ones, the range of typologies varies according to the socio-economic realities and laws of the countries where the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal operate. They have institutes with residential activities, day-care centers, hostels, schools of all levels. We can mention the following schools: in Brasilia, with about two thousand pupils and a college with two hundred students; that of Silang, in the Philippines, which operates an educational institute with one hundred and twelve intern boys and the Rogationist College with vocational training courses, frequented by about two thousand youth. A school with more than eight hundred

students is also active in Campana, Argentina.

For some years now, in Italy, our apostolate of charity at the service of the little ones has been conditioned by government laws, which do not allow us to express educational action in complete freedom. The formula “*Famiglie insieme* Volunteer Association” adopted by the Rogationists community of Oria seems to give good prospects.

An uncharacteristic activity as compared to the traditional ones was started in 1994, to help children and families in need. The *distant adoption* had a remarkable development, especially in favor of some three thousand children in India with the program of school education and the construction of some houses for needy families.

32. Obedience to the Rogate

There is no doubt that all the members of the Congregation of the Rogationists as a whole, and each religious in particular, are obliged to express the apostolate of the Rogate in the terms desired by the Founder and authorized by the competent ecclesiastical authority, as noted in the fourth vow: *to pray-to zeal-to be good laborers*.

The three activities are fundamentally integrated into one and constitute the apostolate of the Rogationist (cf. above, in 21). Therefore, all the Rogationists, from those who have just made their first profession, to the elderly who are no longer able to carry out the apostolate in practice, are required to express the three dimensions, unless they no longer have the capacity to understand and to want.

126

Each Rogationist, in fact, freely, knowingly, and conscientiously made the fourth vow, and bound himself with a firm will and total availability to the fulfillment of the three activities of the one apostolate, without excluding any of them. The Spirit, in fact, together with the charism, plants in our being the seed that contains the potentialities and attitudes to carry out the singular mission of the Rogate, according to the understanding of the Founder and in relation to the physical and psychological conditions of each religious. We pose ourselves this question: how can the Rogationist with a particular role in the community, express at the same time and place the three activities prescribed by the Constitutions?

Concerning prayer, the problem is not raised at all, because despite the precarious conditions and limitations of the religious, he can always pray, everywhere and despite everything, offer his sufferings as a holocaust in fulfillment of the fourth vow. Moreover, the only institutional charism is the active and unifying principle of the life and action of each and every one of those consecrated to the Rogate as a whole.

This corporate mission does not mean that all the members of the Institute do the same things or that the gifts and qualities of the individual are not respected. It does mean that the works of all the members are directly related to the common apostolate, which the Church has recognized as expressing concretely the purpose of the Institute (EE 25).

As in the human body, the members are many, and, although they exercise different functions, all tend to the good and growth of the single organism (cf. 1 Cor 12:12), so each religious, whatever the role assigned to him by obedience and expressed in the Congregation,

he goes beyond the boundaries his uniqueness to be grafted in the one specific apostolic activity.

However, it must be remembered that the concrete realization of any of the three forms of apostolate could be limited or even made impossible due to internal or external factors. In this case, if it would not be possible to act on one or the other of the three dimensions in practice, it is always possible to carry out all three dimensions virtually, at the same time, in a consistent and stable manner. This is provided that the Rogationist, in his every action, is animated by the right charismatic intention (*the intention, in fact, defines and qualifies the action towards its end*). All his works, therefore, must be animated by a sincere and deep desire:

a) that the Lord send good laborers;

b) that this spirit of prayer be spread throughout the Church;

c) that the abandoned little ones and the poor be assisted and provided in their temporal and spiritual needs.

In addition, the Rogationist must demonstrate a lively, sincere, and unconditional willingness to relinquish his current role, though gratifying, and eventually its office, for a different assignment, or to transfer to any community, even abroad. Obviously, he can present possible and real impediments to the Superior. In a Regulation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, the Founder demonstrated an exceptional rigor regarding the transfers of religious.³⁴

Any role must be exercised in the spirit of obedience, sacrifice, and with a good dose of faith in the words of Jesus: *Without me, you can do nothing*, with the certainty that with Him we can do everything that is commanded to us, even in the paradoxical situation of absolute impossibility to act. Christ, in fact, saved the world by being nailed on the cross. In the post-conciliar exhortation VC, John Paul II highlights the superiority of the apostolate of *being* over that of *acting*, when he affirms:

The sense of mission is at the very heart of every form of consecrated life [...] (VC, 25).

Indeed, more than in external works, the mission consists of making Christ present to the world through personal witness. [...] Thus, it can be said that consecrated persons are "in mission" by virtue of their very consecration, to which they bear witness in accordance with the ideal of their Institute (VC, 72).

We can call this type of mission, which is intrinsic to consecrated life, the mission of *being and not of doing* because it is a mission of witnessing, by living day by day according to one's charism.

Consecrated persons will be missionaries above all by continually deepening their awareness of having been called and chosen by God, to whom they must therefore direct and offer everything that they are and have, freeing themselves from the obstacles which could hinder the totality of their response (VC, 25).

³⁴ What sin does the Sister commit when she opposes her transfer? The Sister, by virtue of the vow of obedience, is obliged to obey under mortal sin in serious matters, or when imposed by the Superior with the formula: by virtue of Holy Obedience, by the vow you have, etc. Thus, the transfer from one House to another is a serious matter, and not wanting to obey is a mortal sin! (Regulation for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920).

Finally, we are all convinced by the striking and inescapable conclusion: *At the end of life, the apostolate will be, for many a mission of prayer and suffering only* (EE 26).

Let us conclude this chapter with the exhortations from our Founder, which summarizes the role and duty to express the fourth vow with ever active, growing, and joyous zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls:

The zeal for this daily prayer will always be alive and increasing (AR, p. 467).

For the Daughters of Divine Zeal, obedience to the divine command forms the favorite joy of their heart, the central part of their vocation, their mission, and their glorious predestination (AR, p. 467).

The zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is predominant in all the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus; their mission is to implore from the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, the good laborers for the Holy Church (AR, p. 466).

33. The spirituality of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal flows from the Rogate

Man can guide his own life according to two fundamental options. The first fundamental option is to live according to the Spirit; this is the option of the spiritual man, who lets himself be animated and guided by the Spirit in all his choices, inner attitudes, and actions. His is an existence in the Spirit.

The second option is that of the man who lives according to the flesh, that is, of the one who orients his life according to the standards of the world. His is a purely earthly existence. His interests are only time-bound; he organizes his life according to a trajectory that disregards God and encloses his existence within the confines of time and space.

We are interested in the first option, which is the one chosen by Jesus Christ in his earthly life.

Christ was conceived by working of the Holy Spirit; in baptism in the Jordan, God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power (cf. Acts 10:38); he let himself to be led into the desert by the Spirit (cf. Mk 1:12); he went to Galilee with the power of the Spirit (cf. Lk 4:14); he rejoiced in the Spirit (cf. Lk 10:21); he was aware that the Spirit was upon him to proclaim and carry out the salvation of man (Lk 4, 16 ff.). In the Gospel of John, we read that *from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace* (Jn 1:16; Col 2, 9-10).

Saint Irenaeus affirms: *The Spirit of God descended upon Jesus and anointed him, [...] so that we, receiving from the abundance of his anointing, might be saved* (Irenaeus, Adv. Her. III, 9, 3). The same Spirit flows in Jesus Christ and in us, like the sap that flows in the vine and in the branches. And Saint Paul:

But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (2 Cor 1: 21-22).

To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12: 7).

Now, here are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of workings, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:4-7).

Hence, the theology of the spirituality of the states of life:*

- a) *lay*: incarnated-fundamental;
- b) *religious*: transcendent-eschatological;
- c) *priestly*: transcendent-mediatory.

A fairly complete definition of spirituality is found in the final document of the General Chapter of 1980. In no. 125, we read:

Spirituality is the way how a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, after the impulse of the Holy Spirit, conceives and actualizes his relationship with God in Christ, and the particular way of life with which he relates to his brethren and the cosmic realities, in the concrete situations in which he finds himself.

From this definition, we can observe that spirituality is not an abstraction or an intimate feeling, but that it envelops man in his totality, soul and body, being and acting. Therefore, one of the essential notes of spirituality is not only interiority but also visibility. Spirituality draws its origin from the charism.

The charism is the fundamental criterion that defines and characterizes the spirituality of the founders and the religious Institutes. In fact, it is like the synthesis of all the spiritual and social data of each religious family. It is the central point that, with its luminosity, almost visualizes and differentiates the inner and outer profile of the various Institutes and specifies their apostolate (DC 126).

129

33.1. Note on visibility

The charism is made visible through spirituality, which characterizes and qualifies the actions of the person, giving it a particular style of life and apostolate. In fact, the charism, as an invisible gift, remains buried in the depths of being, and is made visible in the structure of the Institute, in the spiritual features and the dynamic presence of the religious; in other words, spirituality is the *epiphany of the charism*.

Furthermore, the charism on the part of the Spirit, who gives it as a gift. In other words, it highlights the action of the Spirit, which makes the person perceive the specific call.

Spirituality is on the part of the man, who receives the gift and responds to the vocation by accepting God's plan.

* EN: The Author coins terminologies that are difficult to translate: a) *laico*: *incarnata-ricapitolatrice*; b) *religioso*: *trascendente-escatologica*; c) *sacerdotale*: *trascendente-mediatrice*.

33.2. Visibility of the Rogate, from a vocational perspective

The Rogationist, who makes the Rogate visible, offers young people the most effective vocational proposal— on the condition that he offers it in an authentic and joyful, attractive and engaging manner to young people, who are looking for the ambiance where to achieve fulfillment of living a happy life. The document *Starting afresh from Christ* no. 16 states: *The master plan of vocational promotion to consecrated life is that which the Lord himself began when he said to the apostles, John and Andrew, “Come and see” (Jn 1:39).*

A joyful witness to the Rogate is the Religious who:

a) reveals the presence of the Other and makes the face of the Christ of the Rogate visible, at the highest level;

b) lives what he believes, to the point of committing his own life for it. If coherence is lacking, witnessing is lacking.

Witnessing is the best way to tell the truth to others: it is enormously effective, because he does not present value through a doctrinal demonstration, instead he shows it incarnated in his life. Witnessing becomes a generator of vocations because it makes it possible to attract attention in a compelling and convincing way. This explains the ever-growing vocational success in the Congregation of Mother Teresa.³⁵

We know well how much Father Hannibal insists on the fundamental requirement of witnessing, primarily through our relational behaviors. In this regard, he has expressions that are both original and effective. Among others, he says: *Our Lord, in His infinite goodness, wanted to engrave on the forehead of this nascent Work that divine Word, which lay buried for many centuries in the Gospel: “Rogate, etc.”* (AR, p. 73).

Engraving on the forehead does not mean wearing it like some kind of tattoo. Father Hannibal wants the Rogationist to be *the epiphany and visibility of Christ of the Rogate*, to be an effective sign, capable of proclaiming the Rogate with life, of infecting others with the same charismatic interest, of sensitizing and empowering the faithful to the duty to obey the command of Christ. And this goes beyond the signs that he wanted to put on their habits (the emblem of the Sacred Heart with the words of the Rogate). In other words, the Rogationist must be “the sacrament of his charism”, always and everywhere.

33.3. Note on Interiority

If our Founder demanded outward signs, much more he demanded the reality behind the signs. Behaviors, expressiveness, observance of the rule, etc. are words that refer to the surface of the person and can remain distant, or even extraneous to the essential. The signs, the behaviors, are authentic, insofar as they are animated by deep conviction and become a manifestation of a deeply rooted and existentially felt and lived values.

The teachings and exhortations of Father Hannibal on the role that interiority plays in the journey of perfection are remarkable. With impressive frequency, he insists on the need for inner virtue and right intention:

³⁵ The *iter* (= process) and the development of her congregation are amazing. The foundress was born in 1910; in 1950 she founded the Congregation of the "Missionaries of Charity"; in 2003 her sisters were 4,500 in 779 houses spread across five continents. It is not an example of times past, but of today.

The regulation gives nothing but the rules for regulating external actions, but good exterior deportment is of little value if it is not accompanied from within. The aspirant must first place have the right and pure intention of seeking no other than his sanctification, for the pure glory of God and the good of souls. He must walk in the presence of God. He should have Jesus Christ in his mind, in his heart, in his actions, in his words, and in his aspirations. To strive to be all of Jesus: this is the purpose of his existence (Regolamento per Aspiranti Rogazionisti, 1906).

External virtue and observance cannot be sustained for long if the inner virtue is lacking. Each consecrated person will strive to have an interior union with God. He will try to always be in the divine presence and to please God alone in everything and for everything. For inner virtue, it is necessary, first of all, the right intention: to do everything for Jesus, not to desire anything else but God alone (Regole per la Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

The lack of interior life makes even the most attractive ascetic, devotional, and liturgical gestures hypocritical and pharisaic because they are not suggested by evangelical motivations; they are not dictated by the Spirit, but by factors of a social nature, or for the pleasure of narcissistic gratifications. The interior life is the oxygen necessary, above all, for our apostolic and priestly actions, which becomes sterile if they are not always animated by the Spirit. What is important is not what one does, but the internal logic, the right intention, and the deep convictions that inspire our mental attitudes and, consequently, guide and qualify our behaviors.

34. Eucharistic spirituality of the Rogationists

Charism is the source of spirituality, and in as much as each religious Institute has its proper charism, so each has its own spirituality. The Constitutions of the Rogationists affirm it unequivocally: *The spirit of the Institute springs from its charism, which is the understanding and zeal of the Rogate, from which the spiritual and temporal mercy towards the neighbor, in accordance with the thought of the Founder, are a legitimate and immediate consequence (Constitutions of 1980, Art. 9).**

* EN : The Author cited art. 9 and art. 92 of the Constitutions of 1980. For the sake of integration, this English edition also cites below the references to the Rogationist Eucharistic spirituality in the current Constitutions of 2010.

2010 Constitutions, Art. 5: *The vocation and the mission of the Institute are born of the human, spiritual and apostolic experience of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lived among the little ones and the poor of the Avignone Quarter in Messina. Here his priestly ministry and the gift of the understanding and zeal for the word of Jesus: The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Mt. 9:37-38, Lk. 10:2), found the fertile soil where to blossom and produce abundant fruit: the little ones and the poor are evangelized, and their prayer is raised to the Lord of the harvest. From 'Avignone', as a small caravan, our religious Congregation started its journey in the Church and in the world.*

2010 Constitutions, Art. 13: *"The Eucharistic Life": We recognize that the Eucharist is the sacrament in*

What is the spirituality of the Rogationists? *The whole life of the Rogationists should be animated by the Eucharistic Mystery in which they realize the offering of their lives with Christ to the Father and unite themselves to Him in the most perfect way* (Constitutions of 1980, Art. 94).

For the reasons repeatedly highlighted in these pages, ours is an eminently Eucharistic spirituality. Here we wish to recall only one date, the most significant in the past, present, and future history of the Congregation: July 1st, which marks the founding memorial event of the Congregations of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. All the other dates derive their reason for being, meaning, and consistency from July 1st, a totally and uniquely Eucharistic day.

The following statement is a solemn proclamation, among the most characteristic of Eucharistic spirituality:

The center of all devotions and all actions will be the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, for which this least Congregation must have such a holy transport and be so honored and flattered that this Pious Institute can call itself Eucharistic (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

The day of July 1st, *mother of all feasts*, has been considered by the Founder *the primary celebration in the entire Pious Work and a debt of gratitude for the loving and sweetest dwelling of the Sacramental Jesus among us* (Regulation for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920). Consequently, July 1st and every other Eucharistic moment should be a space reserved exclusively for immersion into our Eucharistic spirituality.³⁶

132

After a detailed report on this founding event, which characterizes the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists, the Founder, concludes:

All this was written so that the memory remains perpetual and never lose sight of the fact that the Sacramental Jesus was the Author of this Pious Work consecrated to his Divine Heart, which is always alive and real, loving and palpitating in the Holy Tabernacle, always in our midst, with that divine grace, with which He is an infinite abyss in the Most Holy Eucharist (Regolamento per le Figlie del Divino Zelo del Cuore di Gesù, December 15, 1920).

which Christ perpetuates his consecration to the Father for the salvation of humankind. We believe that it contains the whole spiritual good of the Church. Here we find all the loving center of life and the source of our spirituality. The Eucharist is where we invoke the gift of good laborers more effectively; it gives form, pace, and development to all our activities. We live the daily celebration of the Eucharist as the central moment of the day and commit ourselves to adore the Blessed Sacrament in which Christ has made his dwelling among us.

³⁶ Other reflections can be read in the article *Eucaristia e Rogate nella vita di Padre Annibale*, published in "Studi Rogazionisti" 87 (2005), p. 122-172.

35. Dimensions of the Eucharistic Spirituality

The main connotations of the Eucharistic spirituality of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal are two: Paschal and Agape.

The Spirit of this Institute of the Evangelical Rogation is none other than the Spirit of Zeal, Charity, and Sacrifice, manifested by our Lord Jesus Christ in his mortal life and recorded in the Holy Gospels. However, this zeal, charity, and sacrifice must be based on the humility and meekness of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus, proposed by our Lord Jesus Christ himself to be imitated (Punti di Regola in Scritti, vol. 3, p. 113).

With this affirmation, Father Hannibal highlights the essential features of the Eucharistic spirituality of his Institutes: charity and sacrifice (*Agape* and *Paschal* dimensions). The Eucharistic language is typically sacrificial: priest, sacrifice, holocaust, victim, oblation, offering are terms that find their full realization in Christ, whose bloodless sacrifice in the Eucharist is connected to the bloody sacrifice of the cross. *A disciple is not above his teacher* (Mt 10:24). The teacher is Christ, *who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name, which is above every name* (Phil 2: 8-9). To the Christians of Rome - but much more to those who are called to follow Jesus Christ in evangelical radicality - Saint Paul sends a warm exhortation: *I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship* (Rom 12:1).

133

The Second Vatican Council indicates the most significant moment of this offering in the celebration of the Eucharist: *Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life, they (= the faithful) offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it* (LG 11). In fact, in the Eucharistic prayers, we turn to the Father to send the Holy Spirit so that He may transform us into a *holy and living sacrifice*.

The religious, in total self-surrender, must surpass the laity. In the *Lumen Gentium*, we read that the project of consecration makes the baptismal commitments radical: *pressius, intimius, plenius [more closely, more intimately, more fully]* (50, 44, 42). The *being* (= *esse*) or *proprium* of religious life consists of this becoming *more* that makes Christ's followers, who accepted his call, perfect. It is the logic of the *grain of wheat*.

The Rogationist, a man of the Eucharist, defines himself with it, and cannot fail to feel the inner demand to live his religious consecration in a state of sacrificial tension. He finds his spiritual identity in the Eucharistic sacrifice; it marks his existence, carries out his vocational project, reaches the maximum actuality of his being.

The Eucharistic configuration and conformation, to which our Constitutions exhorts us, has been fully realized, for what is possible on this earth, by our Founder. The General Chapter of 1980 highlights the Eucharistic aspect that qualifies the life of Father Hannibal with these words: *It is of extreme interest to note the ascetic commitment that always animated the Founder in his continuous effort to imitate Christ, the priest on the altar of sacrifice* (DC 121).

The altar of sacrifice to which our Holy Founder ascended every day was the Avignone Quarter. We know the sufferings of the Father and the courage he had in facing the difficulties of its beginnings. In addition to the catastrophic situation of the place, of which we have already

spoken (cf. above, 13, note 10), his charity in service to the least and poor was tested many times. He often had to contend with unmanageable, unruly boys, resistant to any educational intervention.

To Tomasso Cannizzaro he wrote:

My dearest professor, if I did not love Jesus Christ, I would soon be annoyed by staying in the midst of the most abject poor, and depriving myself of everything, and by losing sleep and quiet for the poor and the children (MB I, p. 343).³⁷

The same Chapter affirms that

the specific Eucharistic spirituality of the Rogationists places them in a life of worship and of carrying out the sacrifice of Christ (DC, 124).

In the Constitutions (= of 1980) we read:

The Religious Profession united with the Eucharistic sacrifice means the immolation with Jesus Christ in a sacrifice without reserve. Meantime, the Rogationists should do all in their power to persevere and greatly excel in the vocation to their Institute (Constitutions of 1980, Art. 25).

Let all Rogationists, in union with Jesus Crucified, practice generously, both exterior and interior. Evangelical self-denial, to help to follow Christ, should lead them primarily to receive from and offer to the Heavenly Father the exercise of holy vows, the demands of life in common, the regular observance, the inevitable sufferings of the body and soul, and the hardships of daily duties (Constitutions of 1980, Art. 107).

134

The Constitutions do not suggest discipline using knotted lashes, iron chains, fasting, and the like, but in the first place, the spirituality of the specific charism is expressed with charity, zeal, sacrifice, which are associated terms. Indeed, without charity, sacrifice is a useless suffering, and without sacrifice, charity does not reach the heights of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The spirit of sacrifice is an immediate consequence of true zeal, and it must be the spirit of every member of this least Congregation. With this spirit of sacrifice, the Rogationist of the Heart of Jesus will not spare anything for the glory of God and the good of souls but will embrace fatigue, deprivation, suffering, inconvenience. He will endure contradictions, humiliations, and everything so that he could sacrifice his time, his rest, his tranquility, his health, and all himself, for the salvation of even a single soul (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

³⁷ It is simply overwhelming what Father Hannibal wrote to Father Celona on January 8, 1919: [...] I felt impelled by the divine ineffable goodness of the Heart of Jesus, to throw myself into the midst of the poor, in contact with their filth and their insects ... and after I started the female community, I did not rest until the orphanage of the repulsive and mischievous rascals began, who naturally disgusted me immensely, and they were for me many years of continuous, indescribable suffering! But I felt that my spirit was restored with new strength and sacred vigor.

For Father Celona that superhuman transport that Father Hannibal had towards the poor people, who for him were truly Jesus Christ, was the fruit of heroic faith and ardent charity, earned from the Lord after having overcome an immense disgust, with continuous and indescribable suffering, for so many years (MB I, p. 373).

Father Hannibal, in a Regulation written for the novices of the Daughters of Divine Zeal in 1909, confirms with striking words the demand for sacrifice as an imperative that has its reason rooted in the consecration to the Rogate.

The Novices of this least Congregation must consider the Novitiate as the time of their interior death. They must enter like those condemned to die, led to a scaffold of justice in which their passions are mystically executed and shed the blood of tears, mortifications, and sufferings. The most holy Cross of their beloved Crucified Spouse will be for them the mystical scaffold [...] from the first entry into this holy Novitiate they offer themselves spontaneously as victims of the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus [...]. This is indeed what the Sisters of this least Congregation must be like on account of the august Name they bear as Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, and for the reason of the sublime mission of the Evangelical Rogation of the Heart of Jesus (Regole, in Scritti, vol. 5, p. 551).

The word “victims” in this document is repeated seventeen times.

Let us see some reasons that justify asceticism:

a) the interior demand to conform to Jesus Christ, whose entire life, as the author of the “Imitation of Christ”, says, was cross and martyrdom: *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martirium.*

b) Jesus Christ saved the world with the cross. The Rogationist, who asks the Lord for priests for the salvation of the world, will be the most generous and most cheerful Cyrenean. *Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me* (Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23).

c) To quell the rebellion of the flesh. *For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. The can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. [...] Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:18 ff.) [...] but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:27).*

Father Hannibal says: *Prayer and mortification are two wings with which the soul flies towards God* (AP, pp. 761-765).

God tested Abraham [...] and said to him: Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Gen 22: 1-2). The Rogationist must be willing to sacrifice everything he is and everything he has, as well as everything he received from family, strangers, from the Congregation (money, objects, paper, residence, etc.). For him, the “son” to offer is his body, intelligence, will, capacity to love, to choose, etc.

Blessed John XXIII says: *Without discipline, there is no man; without penance, there is no Christian.*

Only an intelligent and guided asceticism can develop the energy necessary to overcome the force of gravity exerted by the law of the flesh and go up the inclined plane where the original sin has placed us. *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* (Gal 5:24).

Finally, the saints, and Saint Hannibal in particular, treated their body to protect their chastity. However, we need not end with the death on the cross. The Paschal Mystery is a

mystery of resurrection through death. It is a path that leads to the final goal of eternal happiness, today in hope, tomorrow in reality.

For Don Tonino Bello:

Sacrifice is part of our identity card; suffering is a mystery that transcends us and goes beyond us; it makes us most resemble Jesus Christ; our tears feed the river of redemption. On Golgotha, we are allowed only three hours of stop. After three hours, there will be the forced removal of all crosses. Calvary will never be sold as building land.

36. The Agape Dimension of the Eucharistic Spirituality

We cannot speak of the agape dimension without listening to the prayer that Jesus raises up to the Father, on the eve of his passion, before leaving this earth in his physical presence. For all those who will be his, Jesus pleads to the Father that they all be one, *ut unum sint*:

I do not pray these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (Jn 17:20-21).

As you, Father, are in me and I in you. The life of communion in the Church and its expressions find the highest analogy, foundation, and model in the dynamics of Trinitarian love, in the communion of the three Divine Persons (cf. GS 24d). Jesus proposes the same relationship, which he lives with the Father and the Spirit, as the form and measure of the mutual relationship between the members of his mystical Body. He gives to those who follow him the commandment, which he defines as *his* and *new*. *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12)*, is the essential characteristic of the identification card of his disciples: *By this all men will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another (Jn 13:35)*. Consequently, in the Church, all members cannot but live in communion and be in a relationship of pure love for one another.

136

36.1 The Theological Reason for Communion in a Religious Community

The theological reason for *koinonia* within the community is found in the divine agape. In the Holy Trinity, each Person is a pure love relationship with the other. Our communion has its foundation in the theological and ontological plane; as we were created in the image and likeness of God, so we are children in the Son and partakers of the divine nature. In *Gaudium et Spes* (24d), we read:

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prayed to the Father “that all may be one, as we are one” (Jn 17.21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of divine Persons and the unity of God’s children in truth and charity.

Through the incarnation of the Word, the Creator enters into a relationship with the creature, so that God and man are definitely and irreversibly inseparable. God cannot exist without humanity.* The transcendence and the divide between God and man, in Christ, are annulled by virtue of the hypostatic union. Furthermore, in the sacrament of baptism, Christ assumes us ontologically in himself, as members of his body. It is the mystery of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ.

The religious community, a qualified expression of the Church, before being a functional, disciplinary, and apostolic community, is first of all *communion* (*koinonía*). In the present order of Providence, union in Christ is the *only koinonia*, which derives precisely from the *ontological bond*. The members of a community, including those who constitute the Church, insofar as they structure and regulate their being together and their working with external laws, are configured just like any society, for the fact that between them there is only a juridical bond.

Created in the image and likeness of God who is Love and partakers of the divine nature, all the baptized, and in particular the religious, cannot but live *koinonia* as a creatural, theological, ontological, and logical requirement.

John Paul II, in his post-synodal exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, confirms this truth in unequivocal terms:

The Church is essentially a mystery of communion, “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (LG, 4). The fraternal life seeks to reflect the depth and richness of this mystery, taking shape as a human community in which the Trinity dwells, to extend in history the gifts of communion proper to the divine person (VC, 41).

137

The human space inhabited by the Trinity cannot remain a prisoner within the walls of the Institute but must project itself into the Church. In the same document, the Pope urges religious to live *koinonia* as a testimony to be offered to the people of God, as an essential duty:

Even fraternal life, whereby consecrated persons strive to live in Christ with “one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), is put forward as an eloquent witness to the Trinity. It proclaims the Father, who desires to make all of humanity one family. It proclaims the Incarnate Son, who gathers the redeemed into unity, pointing the way by his example, his prayer, his words, and above all his death, which is the source of reconciliation for a divided and scattered humanity. It proclaims the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity in the Church, wherein he ceaselessly raises spiritual families and fraternal communities (VC, 21).

36.2. Charismatic Reasons for Eucharistic Spirituality

There is no doubt that what is stated in this section is valid for all the baptized. However,

* EN: This must be explained well along the lines of doctrine, lest it can be misunderstood. This assertion should always be read in the context of the Incarnation of the Word. The necessity of humanity in God is divinely presupposed in the very person of Jesus Christ. This is the reason why Mary is called the Mother of God since she is the mother of the very person of Jesus Christ, in whom humanity and divinity are hypostatically united without the confusion of natures.

for the Rogationists, men of the Eucharist, it assumes a value of absolute radicality.

The encounter between God and man in Christ in the Eucharistic communion reaches the highest degree of fulfillment and the supreme perfection. Saint Paul affirms:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we, who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The Eucharist, uniting us all to Christ in sacramental communion, also unites us among ourselves and exalts the supernatural nature of *koinonia* to the highest level. Jesus, during the Last Supper, in that Cenacle of the Eucharist and the priesthood, just before handing himself to the executioners, hands himself over to his disciples: *Take and eat all of you: this is my Body, to be given up for you.* With these words, Jesus not only offers his body to his Father as a sacrifice for our sake but gives himself to us as bread, to make us one with him, to transform us into him, and live in communion with him.

After having mentioned the theological reasons, it is only right and useful to highlight the charismatic reasons for communion and the union of hearts. For the Rogationists, the value of *koinonia* in the charismatic dimension finds its root and source in the Rogate, which historically marks the historical itinerary of inspiration, received in a Eucharistic context. The Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal have the certainty that they were generated by the Eucharist and that their spirituality is typically Eucharistic. Therefore, living in a state of communion with Christ and with their brothers, they live the essentials of their specific spirituality and return to the source of their consecration. On the contrary, if *koinonia* is not lived in Rogationist communities, the Eucharistic presence itself runs the risk of remaining an abstraction at a charismatic, existential, and ministerial level. The command of reciprocal love, which Jesus entrusts to the apostles at the Last Supper (*This is my commandment: that you love one another*) is an essential condition to be faithful to the command of the One who chose and constituted us to bring the good news of the Rogate. John Paul II recalls the teaching of Saint John Chrysostom:

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion; we receive the very One who offered himself for us (EdE 16).

Saint John Chrysostom's commentary on these words is profound and perceptive: "For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ (EdE 23).

The Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion (EdE 40).

Saint Augustine effectively echoed this call when, in recalling the Apostle's words: "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it (2Cor. 12:27); he went on to say: "If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord's table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery (EdE 40).

The Eucharist creates communion inasmuch as Christ himself unites his members to himself in such an intimate way, making himself the bond of communion. Therefore, he who does not live *koinonia* destroys the work of the Word who was incarnated by mutual immanence, which is not only personal, but above all communitarian: *Abide in me, and I in you (Jn 15:4).*

In the Eucharistic liturgy, we invoke the Spirit to bring about this communion with Christ: so that, *nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, we may become one body, one spirit in Christ* (Eucharistic Prayer III).

It is always the Holy Spirit that brings about this union:

The same Christ who called them, daily calls together his brothers and sisters to speak with them and to unite them to himself and to each other in the Eucharist, to assimilate them increasingly into His living and visible Body, in whom the Spirit lives, on a journey towards the Father (FLC, 12).

The document, *Eucharist, Communion, and Community* (ECC)* has extremely significant expressions:

The Eucharist is the force that forms the community and increases its capability to love: it makes it a welcoming home for all, the village fountain that offers its spring water to all, as Pope John loved to say. In it every diversity turns into harmony, every pleading voice is heard, every need finds someone who bends over it with love. Encounter, dialogue, openness, and celebration are its characteristic notes (ECC, 28).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* reads: *In the celebration of the mystery of the Lord's Body and Blood, the unity and charity of those who have consecrated their lives to God are strengthened and increased* (VC, 95).

The Rogationist who celebrates or participates daily in the Eucharist cannot help but relate with the confreres in the community in a Trinitarian way. However, the experience of daily life confirms that this is not an easy path.

This is also evident from the fact that all the formative literature of the Congregation, the programs of ongoing formation, both in the central level and in every Circumscription, that reaffirmed, not once but many times, and continues to reiterate the demand and the fundamental need for fraternal communion so that the life of consecration becomes authentic and the apostolate effective.

That it is not easy is also demonstrated by the persistent requests of superiors at all levels, through circular letters, formal and informal visits, through the ongoing formation programs of the Congregation, and of the various Circumscriptions, through congresses, assemblies, etc. The Chapter document *Called to Stay with Him*, while confirming that it is not easy, asserts however that it brings joy, provided that a good intimate relationship is established with Him: *In the measure in which we Rogationists are able to stay with Him, we form communities of brothers who are happy to live together. It is an ideal that is not easy to reach, but towards which we are journeying*. (no. 15).

Furthermore, it is necessary to remember the dynamism of the charism in the community, where all religious have:

- a) a single charism that reaches the depths of our being and conforms us, in a similar way, to the Christ of the Rogate;
- b) the same Founder;

* EN: Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Eucaristia, comunione e comunità. Documento Pastorale dell'Episcopato Italiano*, EDB, Bologna, 1983.

- c) the same vows;
- d) the same Rule;
- e) the same mission;
- f) above all, the same chorus of prayer to the Lord of the harvest, to obtain holy priests, the announcers and ministers of the *agape*.

We are well aware that neither the bond of blood, nor emotional affinity, nor friendship, nor anything else that we can imagine, but rather the Rogate, welcomed and lived in the love of God and brothers, constitutes the specific ontological bond that establishes and forms the Rogationist community.

Only a serious, constant personal and community reflection of the theological, ontological, and charismatic motivations, which are at the roots of *koinonia*, can help us overcome the obstacles encountered in the work of building communities of communion. The *koinonia* of the Rogationist community is not only a demand for authentic life or only a duty of witnessing but a constitutive imperative of the apostolate in the field of the third dimension of the fourth vow. It would be truly absurd to love the little ones and the poor, and to wash their feet, while within the community, they trample on the feet of the confreres, create distances, and are incapable of giving and receiving forgiveness. These are situations that, by our insertion into the social sphere, may come to the knowledge of the outsiders, who expect from us the witnessing of evangelical *koinonia*. Therefore, it is evident that all the members of the Congregation of Father Hannibal must consider the essential condition of having one heart and one soul, in order to expand the *agape* in the service of charity in favor of the abandoned little ones and poor, in which the Founder saw a *second Eucharist*.³⁸

One thing is certain, that, to sanctify ourselves, a great means, a means taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and practiced by the saints and confirmed by the Holy Church, is to unite ourselves together, to share in holy charity, under one rule, in obedience, in poverty, in chastity. From this, from this union emerge countless advantages to correspond to the purposes of the Blessed God, to better fulfill the divine will, to do good to oneself and others, and to sanctify and save oneself (AR, p. 60).

We read in an authoritative document of the Magisterium a commentary to the thought of our Founder:

Above all, by the profession of the evangelical counsels, which frees one from what might be an obstacle to the fervor of charity, religious are communally a prophetic sign of intimate union with God, who is loved above all things.

Furthermore, through the daily experience of communion of life, prayer, and apostolate – the essential and distinctive elements of their form of consecrated life – they are a sign of fraternal fellowship. In fact, in a world frequently very deeply divided and before their brethren in the faith, they give witness to the possibility of a community of goods, of fraternal love, of the program of life and activity which is theirs because they have accepted the call to follow more closely and more freely Christ the Lord who was sent by the Father so that, firstborn among many brothers and sisters, he might establish a new fraternal fellowship in the gift of his Spirit (RHP 24).

³⁸ Cf. G. CIRANNI, *Eucaristia, Rogate e carità*, in “Padre Annibale Oggi, n. 10 (Second Series), pp. 23-26.

37. Agape-Rogate-Heart of Jesus

The principle of eternal charity is the word emerging from the divine zeal of the Heart of Jesus: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut ...".³⁹

This affirmation of Father Hannibal begins with the word "principle," which draws our attention because it is of clear biblical resonance. The term "principle/beginning" in the context in which the Founder places it (draft of the 1906 Constitutions) means source, reason, cause, and the like.

Obviously, Father Hannibal does not mean that eternal charity has its origin, its beginning, from the Rogate. It would be a theological absurdity. Eternal charity is not generated by the Rogate. It is exactly the opposite: the Rogate, a charism with a high potential for love, is generated by the eternal charity of God who wants everyone to be saved through the mediation especially of those who participated in the ministerial priesthood.

Indeed, the solemn, poetic, and prophetic tone of the statement gives us the feeling of leaping further in time; we almost seem to see the Rogate alongside the first word of the Bible and the prologue of the Gospel of John, so we can conclude, with much boldness: *In the beginning, there was the Rogate.*

This is also reflected in the final document of the General Chapter of 1986, *Rogationist Communion and Community*, which projects the Rogate into the Trinitarian mystery, placing it exactly in the Heart of Christ. Here are some passages of no. 24 of the said document:

*The Rogate has its origin in the Father.
In the Rogate, Christ reveals his heart.
The Rogate has its abode in the heart of Christ.
The Rogate is in the heart of the Father; it is in the center of the life of God.
In conclusion, the Rogate is love within the Trinity.*

These assertions are a faithful echo of the Founder's thought, which he confirms widely in his writings.

[...] *The great word out of the divine zeal of the Heart of Jesus: "Rogate..."* (Scritti, vol. 60, p. 53).

That Word of Jesus Christ is a command of the zeal of his divine Heart (Regole della Pia Congregazione dei Rogazionisti del Cuore di Gesù, November 9, 1914).

Here is the great word, the divine command, which on the other hand could only flare up from the burning zeal that tormented the Most Holy Heart of Jesus; and, using the biblical word, this zeal devoured that divine Heart ("God and Neighbor", June 1925, p. 13).

It is Father Hannibal's conviction that the Rogate has its origin and its abode in the divine agape, which is historically manifested in the Eucharistic Heart of Christ, the icon and

³⁹ From the *Draft of the Constitutions of the Rogationists* of March 22, 1906. On this subject, cf. G. CIRANNI, "Agape e Rogate", in *Studi Rogazionisti*, 90 (July-Sept 2006), p. 95-129.

theological locus where we contemplate the epiphany of divine love. *Ut mittat*, the objective of the Evangelical Prayer, is the expression of the divine agape.

Agape and mission, to love and to send, are inseparable words. With the sending, *God-Love* leaves the Trinitarian borders; he sends his only begotten Son to incorporate all his children into his love: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son* (Jn 3:16). The same heavenly Father, for the same reason (of agape), through Christ, sends the apostles of yesterday and today: *As the Father has sent me, even so I send you* (Jn 20:21).

The agape from the Father is poured out to the Son, from the Son to the apostles and their successors, and, through them, eternal charity bursts into the universe and radiates towards everyone.

“Rogate” and “agape” are essentially related words, and both occupy the infinite spaces of the Heart of Jesus. It is obvious, therefore, that the Heart of Jesus, in the spirituality and the initiatives of the Founder, envelops the Rogationist universe in all its fields.

In the *Declarations and Promises* IV, Father Hannibal draws the fundamental line of the rule of agape-life for himself and his followers, which must render the specific apostolate of good laborers fruitful. He writes: *I declare, that from these precepts of charity, I have formed the goal of my entire priestly ministry and religious life in this Institute*. The title of the magazine “*God and Neighbor*” is emblematic and, at the same time, symbolic of the specific Rogationist mission. On the occasion of its publication (June 26, 1908), Father Hannibal addressed the Heart of Jesus with these words: *O sweetest Heart, clearest mirror of purest delight in its intimate essence, please receive into your gentlest fibers this periodical, which has two purposes united as one: God and neighbor*.

Father Hannibal, indeed, an expert and original navigator in the infinite ocean of divine love, received from the Spirit the inspiration to anchor his institutions to the Heart of Christ. He desired the name of *the Heart of Jesus* for his poor children, for his clerics, for the Rogationists, for the Daughters of Divine Zeal, for the Evangelical Rogation, etc. Therefore, it is not a simple superficial qualification, but rather an *essential note* that defines the agape identity of the persons and works of Father Hannibal and a fundamental element of the spirituality of the Rogationists.

The former Superior General, Father Giorgio Nalin, highlighted this fact in the circular letter of April 23, 2006, in which he writes that the Founder:

(He) saw an intrinsic link between the Rogate and the Heart of Christ. The Rogate itself is an expression of the compassionate Heart of Christ. Father Hannibal, who nourished his charismatic spirituality at the sources of the word of God, drew the true charity, that is the Rogate, from the “burning furnace” of the compassionate Heart of Jesus.

The Word who was and is with God (cf. Jn 1: 1), although remaining always in this eternal relationship of love, in order to fulfill the plan of salvation, he came to bring to earth the fire that will keep on burning (cf. Lk 12, 49). The fire of divine love that we contemplate in the burning furnace of the Heart of Christ, from where priests and apostles, the bearers and “vestals” of this fire, come out. Father Hannibal speaks of this in the first prayer to obtain good laborers: *O Jesus, open your Divine Heart and may good and holy laborers to your Church come out from it. Yes, draw them from the depths of your Sacred Heart*.

37.1 The Rogate is the principle of eternal charity because the priest is a mystery of love

If the spirituality of the priest is essentially formed by the configuration to Christ, the icon of the Father's merciful love, the priest cannot but be himself that mystery of love, which is shared with him with the sacrament of Holy Orders. John Paul II recalls:

Live the mystery that has been placed in your hands. This is the invitation and the admonition, in which the Church addresses the priest in the Rite of Ordination when the offerings of the holy people for the eucharistic sacrifice are placed in his hands. The "mystery" of which the priest is a "steward" (1 Cor. 4:1) is definitively Jesus Christ himself (PdV, 24).

In a particular way, priests are the mystery and ministers of the divine agape by virtue of the sacrament that marks, molds, and characterizes them ontologically into Christ (cf. PdV, 21), the supreme expression of the divine love that saves. Pastoral charity must mold the life and works of the priest because it constitutes not only his precise task but also a logical and responsible response to the gift received:

The internal principle, the force which animates and guides the spiritual life of the priest inasmuch as he is configured to Christ the head and shepherd, is pastoral charity, as participation in Jesus Christ's own pastoral charity, a gift freely bestowed by the Holy Spirit and likewise a task and a call which demand a free and committed response on the part of the priest (PdV, 23).

Before entrusting the missionary mandate to the apostles (cf. Mt 28:19) and because of the stupendous and tremendous handing over of the Eucharist and the priesthood in the Upper Room, Jesus prays to the Father for the apostles: *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth* (Jn 17:17-19). The "truth" is Christ himself, the only savior of the world. So, the Father, through his consecratory action, regenerates the apostles, creating in them a new image, that of Christ, *his beloved Son* (Col 1:13). With this prayer, Jesus asks the Father to overflow with his divine love those whom he sends, so that, perfect in unity, they may enter into Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: *I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me* (Jn 17:23).

143

37.2 The Rogate is the principle of eternal charity because the priesthood is the ministry of Christ's charity

The priesthood is not only a mystery but also a ministry, a service of love. The missionary plan has its beginning in the divine agape. The Incarnate Word realizes it in the era of the Church through the collaboration of those whom he calls, making them his disciples. After his ascension to heaven, Jesus entrusts to the apostles the missionary mandate: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age* (Mt 28:18-20).

Go, for I have other sheep that are not of this fold (Jn 10:16).

Having received the mission to evangelize, the apostles spread out throughout the

world. This mission, especially through the ministry of priests, who have the duty to bring the good news of salvation given to us in Jesus Christ, is still going on and will continue until the end of the centuries. Benedict XVI affirms: *The priest is part of that chosen group that Christ once gathered around himself. The Gospel of charity must reach the ends of the earth. The Lord of the harvest, who called the first disciples, continues to consecrate and send the collaborators of the beloved Son, to teach, preach, heal (cf. above, in 16), to bring to the world the signs of his love, to make known a person who has the name and face of Jesus of Nazareth, the supreme icon of God-Charity.*

John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio* 89, states:

The missionary is urged on by “zeal for souls”, a zeal inspired by Christ’s own charity, which takes the form of concern, tenderness, compassion, openness, availability, and interests in people’s problems. [...] The missionary is a person of charity. In order to proclaim to all his brothers and sisters that they are loved by God and are capable of loving, he must show love toward all, giving his life for his neighbor.

... every man who is loved by God ... The love of brothers does not exclude anyone. The preferential option for the poor (cf. VC, 82) is such because being in need, they are the first, but not the only ones. Our Founder, although he is called *the father of the orphans and the poor*, extended his ardent love to professionals and intellectuals as well. On a sheet that accompanied the Letter to Friends, he writes:

As a priest of Jesus Christ, from the time I embraced this holy ministry, I have always felt a lively affection, which made me desire the good and happiness of others as my own. [...] I have seen my brother and my lord in everyone, and what I have desired for myself in this life and in the next, I desired them equally for everyone. [...] And now, what else is there for me to add? [...] I exhausted all the loving and insinuating persuasions to lead you into the saving arms of God, your Creator and Redeemer, to call your attention to the great importance of being saved eternally along with all your relatives [...]. Yes, I have prayed; I will pray for your eternal salvation until the end of my life. [...] But that is not enough. When I will be in heaven, in the bosom of my Creator and divine Redeemer, as I firmly hope, I will continue to pray face to face with my adorable Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saint after whom you are named and your Guardian Angel so that you may be saved eternally together with relatives, seeking your cooperation henceforth. And may I have the grace to have you as a companion in the eternal bliss! (AP, pp. 472-473).

144

Benedict XVI, in the message, on the occasion of the World Mission Day (2006), writes:

Charity, the soul of mission [...]. God's love for every person constitutes the heart of the experience and proclamation of the Gospel, and those who welcome it, in turn become its witnesses.

[...] It was after his resurrection that Jesus gave the Apostles the mandate to proclaim the news of his love. [...] Ever since, the Church has continued this same mission, which an indispensable and ongoing commitment

This is the reason why Father Hannibal affirms that the Rogate, that word of Jesus

Christ is a command of supreme importance, indeed an infallible remedy for the salvation of the Church and society (cf. *Scritti*, vol. 2, p. 144). He goes on to emphasize that without the Catholic priesthood it would be difficult to conceive works of faith and charity, mercy, and compassion.

In truth, what work of faith and charity can you think of on earth without the Catholic priesthood? (AR, p. 697).

*Jesus Christ Our Lord addressed those words: Rogate ergo, etc.... suam especially to the bishops, who were the chosen representatives of the Apostles, and to the priests who were the figures of the disciples, The need for this Prayer is still drawn from the great need that the Holy Church and all the peoples of the world have. It is a pre-established order of God that man cannot be led to truth and salvation except through the Priest. God established that the same Redemption becomes useless without the Priest to continue it and apply its fruits (News and Regulations for the Members of the Sacred Alliance, in Scritti, vol. 3, p. 39).*⁴⁰

Saint John Mary Vianney affirms: *If there were no priests, the passion and death of Jesus would not be worth anything.* Therefore, the sending on the part of the Father, demands the Evangelical Rogation. The Founder has no doubt: *Vocations, like efficacious grace, descend from on high, and if we do not pray, if we do not carry out the command of Jesus Christ, vocations will not descend* (AP, p. 127). Without priests, Father Hannibal continues, the resources for the expansion of the kingdom of God would dry up: *There is no doubt that the greatest resources that the Holy Church may have for the expansion of the kingdom of God is contained in this divine command* ("God and Neighbor", June 1925, p. 13).

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, using the words of Saint Augustine, John Paul II affirms that each priest must configure himself to Christ as head and shepherd, and express pastoral charity in his ministry:

The ministry of the priest, precisely because of its participation in the saving ministry of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, cannot fail to express and live out his pastoral charity, which is both source and spirit of his service and gift self. In its objective reality, the priestly ministry is "amoris officium", according to the previously quoted expression of St. Augustine. This objective reality itself serves as both the basis and requirement for a corresponding ethos, which can be none other than a life of love, as St. Augustine himself points out: "Sit amoris officium pascere dominicum gregem." This ethos, and as a result the spiritual life, is none other than embracing consciously and freely – that is to say in one's mind and heart, in one's decisions and actions – the "truth" of the priestly ministry as an "amoris officium" (PDV, 24).

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, states:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of

⁴⁰ The affirmation that God has established that Redemption is rendered useless without the Priest is identical to that of Saint John Mary Vianney: *If there were no priests, the passion and death of Jesus would not be worth anything.* Our Founder probably did not know Vianney's saying, otherwise, he would have quoted it in the speech he gave at Forza D'Agrò on August 9, 1908, for the installation of the parish priest Antonino Catanese. In fact, in this speech, he refers to the other statement of the Cure of Ars: *If I saw a priest and an angel, I would greet the priest first and then the angel.* This phrase, quite significant when seen from the apologetic point of view, does not have the objective force of the previous ones with reference to the mystery and ministry of redemption entrusted by Christ to the priest. The two saints, without copying each other, affirm the same truth.

whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach [the] good news! (Rm 10:13-15).

In this perspective, the Evangelical Rogation has the purpose of triggering divine breaking-in (=irruzione) the ways of men, of bringing the *Deus-Caritas* into collision with all men, not for conflict, but, rather, for an embrace of love, precisely in this humanity, which is dying for lack of love.

It is worthwhile, to this effect, to read some passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

no. 74: God "desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:4), that is, of Christ Jesus (Jn 14:6). It is necessary, therefore, that Christ be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this Revelation may reach the ends of the earth.

no. 875: "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" No one - no individual and no community - can proclaim the Gospel to himself: "Faith comes from what is heard." No one can give himself the mandate and the mission to proclaim the Gospel. The one sent by the Lord does not speak and act on his own authority, but by virtue of Christ's authority; not as a member of the community but speaking to it in the name of Christ. No one can bestow grace on himself; it must be given and offered. This fact presupposes ministers of grace, authorized, and empowered by Christ. From him, bishops and priests receive the mission and faculty ("the sacred power") to act in persona Christi Capitis; deacons receive the strength to serve the people of God in the diaconia of liturgy, word, and charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbyterate. The ministry in which Christ's emissaries do and give by God's grace what they cannot do and give by their own powers is called a "sacrament" by the Church's tradition. Indeed, the ministry of the Church is conferred by a special sacrament.

146

38. The Marian Dimension of the Rogationist Spirituality

In the spirituality of the Rogationists, Mary, Mother and Queen of the Rogate, occupies a primary and important place.

Witnesses affirm that Father Hannibal's devotion to the Virgin was *very tender, ardent, and constant*. He honored Mary with faithful imitation, exalting her under all titles because she is the Queen and Mother of the Evangelical Rogation. Concerning the Eucharistic spirituality, for the Rogationists, Mary is the sublime and ineffable model. St. John Paul II, who spoke of the relationship between the Eucharist and Mary with singular depth and originality, invites us to learn from the school of the Mother of Jesus:

If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why since ancient times, the

commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of the East and West (EdE 57).

In the Founder's intuition, Mary is associated with Jesus Christ in the handing over of the gift of the Rogate. In a sermon written on July 1st, he addressed the Virgin with these words:

You who kept in your maternal heart the words of your Divine Son, you certainly did not fail to keep this sublime utterance, born from the zeal of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus: "Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam." O, admirable mystery of your maternal goodness!

This sacred word, this divine command, hidden "in Corde tuo" [in your heart], you deigned it to reveal to us, your little children in the midst of these hovels, and through us, you also deigned to spread it elsewhere and to draw the attention of the Holy Church to it (Mary Most Holy, life, sweetness, our hope, in Scritti, vol. 54, n. 4228).

Article 10 of the Regulations of the Divine Superiors reads:

Here is a rule that I give you, together with my Blessed Mother, as sweet, kind, and loving superiors: do not get tired of begging the Lord of the harvest [...].

The Founder gave his followers a badge with the features that make up the Virgin's aspects, so that they may reproduce them in their lives, through true devotion and imitation. *Next to Jesus and in Jesus, I will love with the same love his Blessed Mother, whose devotion, I perceive to my great consolation, forms the special badge this Pious Institute (Declarations and Promises, III).*

147

It is interesting to note a truly original affirmation of Father Hannibal, who sees in Mary, the Mother of the Church, the one praying (= *orante*) for priestly vocations, precisely as a Eucharistic woman:

We know that the Blessed Virgin kept in her heart the words of her divine Son (Lk 2:51). And why did she keep them? Perhaps to render them idle, like the talent of the Gospel? (Mt 25, 25). Not at all. Instead, to practice tirelessly what her divine Son commanded. That is why she never idly ate the Eucharistic Bread, but with her prayers, she procured and still procures ministers of the altar (AR, p. 696).

Apart from the fact that her prayers, together with her humility and virginity, she obtained from the heavenly Father, the Redeemer, the *Priest of Priests* (Eucharistic title of July 1st of 1935), she continued to pray and to make a school of prayer for the apostles in the Upper Room to obtain good laborers. Besides, she still intercedes with the Lord of the harvest in heaven to send holy priests on earth.

As Mother of the High Priest, Mary is the mother of all to whom Jesus shares his priesthood; of those through whose hands, when celebrating the Eucharist, make the Word of God sacramentally become flesh, just as it became flesh in her immaculate womb.

Mary, Mother of priests, participates in the priesthood of Christ not in the line of the common priesthood of the baptized, or of the ministerial one, but in the line of motherhood. It is so because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, who has been a priest from the moment of the incarnation. At that moment, human nature, assumed by the person of the Word, received the

anointing of the Holy Spirit, to perform the priestly functions of mediator between God and man.

Finally, the Rogationist, following the words Mary addressed to the servants of the wedding at Cana: *Do whatever he tells you* (Jn 2:5), must feel that tender exhortation to accomplish the Word that defines him as a Rogationist.

39. The Most Holy Name of Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Anthony of Padua

A further constitutive element of the spirituality of the Rogationists is the veneration and devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus. To obtain good laborers from the Lord of the harvest, Father Hannibal has chosen to follow the path indicated by Jesus himself: *Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you* (Jn 15:16).

Let the Daughters of Divine Zeal understand well that this great devotion to the most adorable and Holy Name of Jesus must be kept alive and fervent in our Institutes, with the consecration of the whole month [of January], a solemn novena, the Feast of January 31, and the presentation of the supplication (= the Great Supplica) containing 34 petitions or requests (Regulation for the Daughters of Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, December 15, 1920).

148

The devotion to Saint Joseph, the guide and teacher of the interior life, forms part of the Rogationist spirituality. He was proclaimed *vice-owner of the mystical harvest* (July 1st of 1905), *the most exalted guardian of the Rogate* (July 1st of 1930), and *the heavenly custodian of priests* (July 1st of 1935).

Also, Father Hannibal proclaimed the glorious miracle worker Saint Anthony of Padua an *outstanding benefactor of these Institutes and all of us* and an *excellent model of a good laborer*. In fact, in the hymn of July 1st of 1924, he proclaimed him a *perennial conqueror of souls*.

40. The Path of Faithfulness

40.1 Jesus, Model of Faithfulness

Our faithfulness must find reason and strength in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, *the faithful and true witness* (Rev 3:14). Saint Paul affirms this clearly:

That is why we utter the Amen through him, to God for glory. It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his

seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2 Cor. 1:20-22).

With the word “seal”, Saint Paul intends to highlight our participation in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, in the Spirit. The whole life of Christ is constantly anchored to the will of the Father, even when the latter presents him the bitter chalice of passion. Jesus demonstrates his faithfulness to the Father:

1. when he remains in the Temple, while Mary and Joseph, distressed, looked for him (cf. Lk 2:49).
2. when he strongly rebuked Peter, who wanted to draw him away from the Father's will (cf. Mk 8:33).
3. in dramatic circumstances, when he declares his intention to do the Father's will, even if everyone should abandon him: *Do you also wish to go away?* (Jn 6:67).
4. at the supreme moment of his life, when he raises the song of faithfulness to the Father: *It is accomplished* (Jn 19:30). Christ is the Father's “yes”: all the Old Testament promises found faithful fulfillment in him.

After Christ, Mary is the model of our faithfulness. The Council exalts the faith of Mary: *She faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross* (LG 58). She offered her consent loyally during the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering [beneath the cross] (cf. LG 62).

40.2 Faithfulness to God's commandments

149

The discourse concerning the faithfulness of those who make the religious profession, whether temporary or perpetual, encompasses all dimensions of Christian perfection. In the first place, the religious must be faithful to the promises of baptism and the commands of God.

When the one called is presented before the altar of Christ to be consecrated to the Rogate, he must already possess the basic perfection of the rich young man of the Gospel: *Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth. [...]. And Jesus looking upon him loved him* (Mk 10: 20-21).

It would be absurd to claim to be a “religious” without having a proven experience of faithfulness to his “being a Christian”. It is impossible to be faithful in the observance of the evangelical counsels if one has not had a valid experience of faithfulness in the observance of God's commands.

If someone wanted to run the risk of building his existence as a consecrated without this essential and robust foundation, he would inevitably end up with devastating consequences at the spiritual, psychological, and social levels.

40.3 Faithfulness during the temporary profession

The novice who makes the first vows, even for a year, immediately sets himself on the horizon of a life that is totally committed to God, that is, he is available to become a perfect holocaust.

The period of temporary vows is oriented towards the perpetual profession, and the duration of temporary profession ought to be like a learning moment and a preparation for the definitive commitment that includes the firm will of absolute faithfulness (cf. *La Formazione Rogazionista*, p. 427).

In his heart, the novice already gives himself to God in a complete, unconditional, and definitive way, but this gift will complete his person with a perpetual profession.

With the temporary profession, the Rogationist is a religious in all aspects. He publicly commits himself to God and his Institute to live the evangelical life of the Christ of the Rogate according to the mind/intelligence, experience, and teaching of the Founder. He embraces all the requirements prescribed in the rules of life and mission, in preparation for the final bond.

The temporary vow has the same seriousness of content, the same gravity of commitment, and the same obligation of conscience as the perpetual vow.

40.4 Faithfulness after perpetual profession

Given that: 1) the consecration of a person in the state of religious life is the exclusive initiative of God; it is a free and gratuitous act reserved to God; 2) God does not repeat the same action twice, because every act of his is unique, definitive, unrepeatable, and irrevocable.

From this, it follows that the Rogationist who accepts the call of God consciously and freely, and lets himself to be consecrated with the perpetual profession, gives himself totally to the Lord, with an equally unique, definitive, unrepeatable, and irrevocable act. The mystery that is realized in the perpetual profession starts from the free initiative of God, and the one who consecrates himself freely gives his answer that includes totality and irrevocability: *I make my perpetual vow*.

He who goes to the altar of the Lord to pronounce the perpetual profession ought to have the same feelings that Benedict XVI had during the conclave, which elected him pontiff. On that occasion, he confided to his friends: *The progress of the voting made us understand that the guillotine was slowly approaching, and it was directed to me*. The guillotine makes a sharp blow. Nobody ever used the guillotine as a metaphor to indicate the action of the Spirit. The guillotine of the Spirit separated Joseph Ratzinger's life from that of Benedict XVI with a sharp blow. This image also fits well in demonstrating the irrevocable experience that we live when we surrender ourselves to the Lord with all our being, in response to his all-encompassing call.

The faithfulness of the religious with perpetual vows is analogous to and exceeds spousal fidelity.

In the “*here I am*” of the perpetual profession and the following consecratory prayer, a nuptial rite is performed.⁴¹ In the act of consecration, the Spirit shares the grace of the Rogate to the one consecrated, like the outpouring during the Pentecost. This, in turn, produces a new and indelible participation in the life and mission, which the Christ of the Rogate proclaims in the synagogue of Nazareth: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, etc. (Lk 4:18).

According to John Paul II, *by allowing themselves to be guided by the Spirit on an endless journey of purification, they become, day after day, conformed to Christ, the*

⁴¹ In the liturgy of the consecration of virgins, the giving of the ring expresses a spousal symbol.

prolongation in history of a special presence of the Risen Lord (VC, 19). For the Rogationists, the Risen Lord is the Christ of the Rogate.

It is a spousal choice that goes beyond the mere legal bond and is essentially configured as a pact of love. Jesus saying of himself, *just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love*, he says to his disciples, *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love* (Jn 15:10).

The command that the Rogationist received from the Spirit is the Rogate, and from the moment he pronounces his "yes", he is no longer "celibate", but a married person, indissolubly and totally united to the Christ of the Rogate, chosen by love.

In the document attesting to the profession of vows - whether temporary or perpetual - signed by the Rogationist at the altar (symbol of Christ), Christ also affixes his signature. A signature, belonging to Christ, that no one will ever erase. Equally indelible must be the signature of the Rogationist.

40.5 Fight to win

Like that of Christ, our faithfulness is also continually threatened by the devil. The fight against the tempter is constant in the life of consecrated persons and requires vigilance, prayer, union with God, and continuous recourse to the Spirit (cf. Mt 6, 13; 1Pd 5, 8).

However, we must not be discouraged. Faithfulness is not only stirred up by God, but it is also sustained and nurtured by him:

God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond your strength; but with the temptation will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Cor 10:13).

But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil. (2 Thes 3:3).

It would be an excellent and holy habit for the Rogationist, whose vocation is generated from the Eucharist, that in the celebration or participation in the Holy Mass, when he receives the Body and Blood of the Lord and pronounces the liturgical *amen*, he would renew and revive the *yes* of his profession of the vows. He then asks the Lord for the strength to be *a faithful and truthful witness* of the sublime vocation he received and to present himself as such to his brothers. However, we must remember that faithfulness is not built on soft pillows but on living stone, and that is why it requires perseverance, vigilance, and sacrifices, so as not to waste a precious existence in the Church.

To remain faithful to one's vocation, and follow Jesus Christ till the end, it is necessary to accept the challenges and fight with the certainty of victory. Difficulties must not lead to discouragement because God is with us.

The call to holiness is accepted and can be cultivated only in the silence of adoration before the infinite transcendence of God [...]. In practice, this involves great fidelity to liturgical and personal prayer, to periods devoted to mental prayer and contemplation, to Eucharistic adoration, to monthly retreats, and spiritual exercises. There is also a need to rediscover the ascetic practices typical of the spiritual tradition of the Church and of the individual's

own Institute. These have been and continue to be a powerful aid to authentic progress in holiness. Asceticism helps master and correct the inclinations of human nature wounded by sin, is truly indispensable if consecrated persons are to remain faithful to their vocation and follow Jesus on the way of the Cross. It is also necessary to recognize and overcome certain temptations, which, sometimes, by diabolical deceit, present themselves under the appearance of good. [...]

The path to holiness, thus involves the acceptance of spiritual combat. This is a demanding reality that is not always given due attention today. Tradition has often seen an image of this spiritual combat in Jacob's wrestling with the mystery of God, whom he confronts to receive his blessing and to see him (cf. Gen 32:23- 31). In this episode from the beginnings of biblical history, consecrated persons can recognize a symbol of the asceticism which they need to open their hearts to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters (VC, 38).

APPENDIX I

The Consecrating Action of God in the Religious Profession

Since some scholars of religious life hold that *consecration* begins with the temporary profession, while others – and they are the majority – are of the opinion that it happens only in the perpetual profession, I consider it is useful, for the purpose of giving an answer, to examine the rite of the two professions.

First of all: 1) to consecrate a person in the religious state is God's exclusive action. The current expression *I consecrate myself* does not mean I make myself sacred, but it means that I dedicate myself (from the Latin *devovere*), I keep myself apart, I destine myself, I offer myself, I give myself, I put myself in the hands of God (from Latin *mancipare*), I consider myself taken (=expropriated).⁴² In the religious profession, we must not confuse the consecrating action by God, who acts through the Church, with the action of the person who gives himself totally and unconditionally to God. 2) God does not repeat the same act twice, because it is unique, definitive, unrepeatable, and irrevocable.

If these premises are true, the thesis of those who affirm that consecration occurs in the rite of the temporary profession is not sustainable. If this were so - since the act of God is unique, definitive, unrepeatable, irrevocable - there would be no need to repeat the consecration three, four, or six times.

Nor can we admit that in temporary profession there would be the beginning of a consecration that will have its fulfillment in the perpetual profession. God does not consecrate several times: with consecration, he imposes a total seal on the being and the action of the person.

153

Let us examine the rite of temporary profession. There is no mention of consecration in this rite. In fact, to the interrogation of the celebrant, the candidate answers: *I humbly ask you to be able to consecrate myself to God*. He does not say *by God* but *to God*; thus, the action is posed by the one who is speaking, not by God. In the prayer, the priest says: *today he wants to consecrate his life to You*, and not *he wants to be consecrated by You*. Finally, in the handing of the religious habit, the priest addresses the candidate and says *by this sign of your consecration*, that is, “sign that you consecrated yourself to God”: the subject is the candidate.

Let us now briefly examine the rite of perpetual profession. Let us begin by highlighting its solemnity, analogous to that of the ordination of priests. Solemnity is required by the nature of the rite. In the litanies, which are an integral part of the rite, the priest asks *God to bless, sanctify, and consecrate* the candidates. The same invocations are addressed to the Lord in the ordination of the priests. The term “consecration” as God's action is explicitly and incontestably found in *solemn blessing* or *consecration*. In the first formula, the celebrant says *pour out the Holy Spirit upon them*. In the second formula, we have the invocation of the Spirit

- the consecratory epiclesis - *We beg you, O Father, to pour out the Paraclete Spirit from heaven on these children of yours*.

The enormous difference between the rite of the temporary profession and the rite of the perpetual profession is evident. The Magisterium of the Church also affirms that only in

⁴² Cf. the Latin edition of the *Lumen Gentium*, 44a, 44b; *Perfectae Caritatis* 5, 6c.

the perpetual profession there is consecration on the part of God. To the question: *Does consecration happen with the temporary or perpetual profession?* The Congregation for Divine Worship answers: *A person is consecrated by perpetual profession and by the concomitant liturgical action of the Church. The very nature of consecration requires it, which presupposes totality and perpetuity* (“Notitiæ”, March 1971, p. 109). This answer was given after the Second Vatican Council and after the promulgation of the rite of religious profession authorized by Paul VI and promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship on February 2, 1970. It does not appear to me that there were statements to the contrary.

APPENDIX II

PRIESTLY UNION OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

By-Laws*

I. NATURE and PURPOSE

1. The *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations*⁴³ is a specific form of membership to the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV) for those ordained Ministers who wish to live the gift of prayer for vocations in a *more intense communion* among themselves and with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.
2. The inspiration and foundation of the *Union* is the command of Jesus, “The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Pray [Rogate] therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9, 37-38, Lk 10,2), lived according to the spirit and example of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, the Founder the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.
3. The *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations* proposes to its members:
 - a. To adopt the mission of the UPV, that is:
 - **to pray** for the *laborers of the harvest*;
 - **to spread** the prayer for the laborers of the harvest in the Church and in the world so that it would become universal;
 - **to be good laborers** themselves in the *harvest of the Lord* according to one’s state of life.
 - b. To realize with the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal an effective spirituality of communion, through sharing the charism of the Rogate and the mutual prayer for the fulfillment of their respective missions.
 - c. To rekindle one’s priestly vocation through the spirit of prayer for *laborers for the harvest*, taking as a model of life St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, who was a witness and apostle of this prayer.
4. Bishops and priests, both diocesan and religious, of whatever Catholic rite and hierarchical rank, may be part of *the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations*.
5. Membership to the PUPV shall not entail any financial burden and shall be done by sending a letter to the *Office of the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations*.

* EN: In Appendix II of the original Italian, the Author reports the By-Laws of the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (PUPV) that was in vigor at the time of the publication of the book. In this English edition, we report the revised version of the PUPV By-Law, as well as the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV) By-Laws, both authorized on September 8, 2014, by Fr. Angelo A. Mezzari, the Superior General at that time.

⁴³ Original name: *Sacred Alliance*; in more recent times: *Rogationist Priestly Alliance* (= and most recently, *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations*). It was founded by St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, an outstanding apostle of prayer for vocations, on November 22, 1897.

6. It is good to renew one's membership annually, on special occasions, such as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

II. ORGANIZATION

7. As to the procedures of membership to the UPV, the organization of the PUPV is integrated into that of the UPV, which shall operate according to the indications in nos. 9-12 of its By-Laws.

III. PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS

8. The members of the *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations* commit themselves to:
 - a. Celebrate periodically (to be determined) a Holy Mass for vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life.
 - b. Celebrate periodically (to be determined) a Mass for the charismatic mission of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.
 - c. Live their ministry in the dimension of the culture of vocations and to promote the primacy of prayer in the pastoral care of vocations to the priestly ministry and the consecrated life.

IV. SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL BENEFITS

9. Every month a Holy Mass "*pro vivis*" and "*pro defunctis*" for the members of the *Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations* is celebrated at the respective General Houses of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.
10. Prayer shall be said in the communities of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal with a specific intention for the sanctification of the members of the *Union*, for the parishes entrusted to their care, for the Seminaries of Bishops and the Novitiates of the religious institutes.
11. In order to deepen and share the spirituality of the "Rogate", spiritual retreats, formation courses on prayer, biblical and theological-pastoral weeks on vocational perspective, with particular attention to the pastoral care of vocations to the priestly ministry and the consecrated life are organized for the members.
12. The communities of Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal are points of spiritual reference in the territory for members of the *Union* and offer their service for youth and vocation animations.

The members of the *Union* may receive, upon request, vocational publications of the Rogate Vocation Center of the Circumscription.

V. OFFICE

13. In as much as the procedure of membership is through the UPV, the offices of the PUPV are those indicated in the By-Laws of the UPV (nos. 15-16)

APPENDIX III

UNION OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS BY-LAWS*

I. NATURE and MISSION

1. The **Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV)**⁴⁴ is an ecclesial aggregation inspired by Jesus' command, "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9,37-38; Lk 10,2), according to the charism of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, commonly referred to as the charism of the "Rogate" and transmitted to the Congregations he founded: the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus and the Daughters of Divine Zeal. The UPV is of spiritual nature and makes use of the suitable organizational structure for the diffusion of prayer for *laborers of the harvest*.

"The purpose of this Pious Union is to propagate everywhere this prayer so relevant in our times; so that Rogation would become universal, which merits to obtain from the divine goodness so great a mercy" (Father Hannibal M. Di Francia, *Rules of the Pious Union*, art. 3).

2. The mission of the UPV shall be:

- **To pray** for the *laborers of the harvest*;
- **To spread** the prayer for the laborers of the harvest in the Church and in the world so that it would become universal;
- **To be good laborers** in the harvest of the Lord according to one's state of life.

3. The UPV is addressed to all Catholic faithful of any vocation: lay, consecrated, and ordained ministers. In the universal spirit of the "*charism of the Rogate*", it is likewise addressed to all those who are interested in building a civilization of love, whatever may be their profession of faith.

4. The nature of the UPV commits its members to promote a culture of vocations in the context where they live and work.

5. By its nature, membership to the UPV fosters and entails a path of gradual vocational growth through participation in the ecclesial charism of the Rogate, which is a way to holiness.

II. FORMS OF MEMBERSHIP

6. Membership to the UPV takes different forms and in different ways. Members will be able to choose the one best suited for their spiritual sensitivity and conditions of life.

It is good to renew one's membership annually, on special occasions, such as the

* EN: To have a complete picture of Apostolate of the Rogate, the current English edition has also included the By-Laws of the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV).

⁴⁴ With the original name *Pious Union of the Evangelical Rogation*, it was officially approved on December 8, 1900, by the Archbishop of Messina, Mons. Letterio D'Arrigo.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

7. Individual membership

By filling in the appropriate membership form, each member strives to live the goals expressed in article 2, according to his sensitivity and personal availability.

This first form is basic to all members of the UPV.

8. Community or group membership

a) Cenacles of prayer

The “cenacle of prayer” is a group of members of the UPV and is animated by the person in charge. It aims to:

- be a school of prayer for the laborers of the harvest and center of promoting a journey of holiness;
- offer specific and organized catechesis for the formation of the members;
- deepen the Rogationist spirituality through the celebration of Proper liturgies.

b) Rogationist associations

Membership to any of the Rogationist Associations, by its nature, implies membership to the UPV.

c) Non-Rogationist associations or groups

Members of non-Rogationist associations and groups may join the UPV, as individuals or as groups, filling in the appropriate membership form and committing themselves to live the goals indicated in article 2.

158

III. ORGANIZATION

9. The UPV is an ecclesial aggregation mainly of spiritual character, with an organization at the central and circumscription level. The General Governments of the Congregations of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal are responsible for the supervision and ratification of the general guidelines and policies.

10. The governments of the Circumscriptions of Rogationists and of the Daughters of Divine Zeal promote and support the UPV within their territory through the Rogate Vocation Center of the Circumscription. They will also draw up the *implementing regulation* of the UPV for the Circumscription in which they will specify the roles and responsibilities at different levels and determine the forms of institutional membership of the growing *cenacles of prayer* (See 8a).

11. The Rogate Vocation Center of the Circumscription, in collaboration with local Communities, shall provide the animation and formation of members of the UPV through specific initiatives and the production of appropriate aids.

12. The pastoral care of the UPV members, in the different forms specified by the By-Laws of the Circumscription, is entrusted to local Communities.

IV. SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

13. Each month a Mass “*pro vivis*” and “*pro defunctis*” for UPV members is celebrated in the respective General Houses of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

14. The communities of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal will pray with a specific intention for the sanctification of the UPV members.

V. PRAYER FOR GOOD LABORERS⁴⁵

O Most Sweet Heart of Jesus by saying: *Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam* (Pray the Lord of the harvest that He may send laborers in His harvest), you gave us confidence that you will hear us when we ask you this great grace; in obedience to your Divine Word, we beseech you, so that you deign to send good laborers into your Church, and for this purpose, we address to you the most efficacious of all the prayers you have taught us. *Our Father...*⁴⁶

VI. OFFICES

15. The UPV has its **legal office** at the General Curia of the Rogationists in Via Tuscolana 167, Rome.

16. At the **general level of coordination**, the offices are in the respective General Houses of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal; at the **operational level**, the UPV has its office in the Rogate Vocation Center of the Circumscription, and at the **local level**, the office is the individual Houses of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

⁴⁵ This original text of the Founder is taken as the official prayer of the *Union*, which can be adapted and translated into the local language.

⁴⁶ Di Francia, *Scritti*, Vol. I, p. 266