

CONGREGATION OF THE ROGATIONISTS OF THE HEART OF JESUS

13th General Chapter

Morlupo, July 5-25, 2022

*The Rogationist religious life today:
unity, coordination, and sharing*

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

PRESENTATION

1. The theme of the 13th General Chapter of the Congregation, *The Rogationist religious life today: unity, coordination, and sharing*, is in tune with the new ecclesial season that Pope Francis has launched with the celebration of the *Synod for a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission*. The "synodal journey," which solemnly opened on Oct. 9-10, 2021, in Rome and then on Oct. 17 in each particular Church, will experience its central and fundamental moment in the celebration of the 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

The choice of theme

2. The choice of the theme for the General Chapter was itself a fruit of a synodal journey. In a letter dated July 26, 2019, Father General consulted the Circumscriptions regarding the theme. It was one of the items discussed during the Conference of Superiors of Circumscription and their Council held in Messina (Oct. 14-19, 2019) as well as in the Conference of Superiors of Circumscription convened a few months later (Feb. 17-21, 2020). The themes that emerged from the consultations were mainly "walking together," "unity," "coordination," and "sharing." Thus, as part of the discernment of the General Council, in his letter of February 25, 2020, Father General defined the theme of the 13th General Chapter.

A synodal path

3. In step with the universal Church, our Congregation in its continuous historical journey is also trying to make "a common journey" capable of combining together unity and plurality, communion and diversity, in the one charism within the enriching multiplicity of cultural expressions. The "Synod on Synodality" constitutes for us a call of the Holy Spirit to build the present and future of the Congregation on the pillars of "communion, participation and mission," of "*unity, coordination, and sharing*". Listening to the Spirit and the voice of our brothers and sisters, especially those who have no voice, we are invited to foster "a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where a diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church's mission in the world"¹ and our Congregation. This implies a renewed deepening and enrichment of our fidelity to and unity in the Rogationist charism and mission, which translates into a sense of belonging to the same religious family and fraternal

¹ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Vademecum*, Vatican City 2021, no. 1.3.

relationship with a shared and common project. Governance structure and coordination are, without a doubt, particularly concrete dimensions of this journey.

Drafting the document

4. The drafting of the *Instrumentum Laboris* followed the synodal path of listening to and involving the confreres, communities, and Circumscriptions. After determining the theme for the General Chapter, on February 25, 2020, the Superior General formed a Commission for the *Lineamenta*. Due to the limitations caused by the pandemic, it was decided to form a Commission with a small number of members who did their work entirely online. The Commission decided to send a survey form to all Circumscriptions to solicit ideas, suggestions, and proposals on the issue. The abundant responses received from communities and individual confreres formed the basis for the development of the text of the *Lineamenta*. The Commission decided to accept, harmonize, and integrate all suggestions into the document. The final draft was presented to the General Council on October 15, 2021. After the results of the election of delegates to the General Chapter came out on October 19, 2021, the Superior General formed the Pre-Chapter Commission composed of eight capitulars, in which each Circumscription is represented. Its task was to draft the *Instrumentum Laboris*, welcoming and synthesizing the contributions of the communities and Confreres contained in the *Lineamenta*. This commission, too, due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, worked mainly online, except for an in-person meeting with the participation of the majority of members, held in Rome on January 17-18, 2021. It soon noticed that the contents of the *Lineamenta* were too broad and diverse; therefore, the Pre-Chapter Commission decided to make a selection, taking into consideration only those directly relevant to the theme of the Chapter.

Text structure

5. To make the reading of the *Instrumentum Laboris* more fluent and didactic, the Commission reordered the themes and structured the document into the following four parts: *Part 1. Rogationist Religious Life Today* gives a description of our communities and mission; *Part 2. The path of unity* highlights the main sources of our common identity; *Part 3. The path of sharing* presents the concrete ways of belonging to the common charismatic family; and *Part 4. The path of coordination* outlines practical ways of regulating sharing and building unity.

Transmission

6. The *Instrumentum Laboris* was submitted to the General Council and is now transmitted to the members of the 13th General Chapter for personal or common reading and for any comments and additions to be sent to the Commission before the Chapter begins. In addition, the text is also uploaded on our website to allow everyone's participation. As the name implies, it is an aid to the common journey of discernment of the Congregation, involving all the Confreres, in the immediate preparation for the 13th General Chapter and its celebration.

PART ONE

ROGATIONIST RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY

The pilgrimage of the small caravan

7. St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, referring to the biblical image of the journey of faith of the People of God, describes the beginning of the Pious Work as a "small caravan" that in its first members set out on a "pilgrimage," which, although "arduous", was always accompanied and "comforted" by the Bread from Heaven.² The charism of the Rogate, entrusted by the Holy Spirit to the Founder for the edification of the whole Church, sown in the fertile soil of poverty in the Avignone District, grew and branched out from Sicily to Apulia, Italy, and beyond.

Proclaiming the Rogate in ever-changing contexts

8. We celebrate this year the 125th anniversary of our foundation and witness the living history of the Rogationist Congregation as it continues to fulfill its mission of proclaiming the Gospel of the Rogate to the whole world in the new existential frontiers, both as the first proclamation (*kerygma*) in the *missio ad gentes*, and in collaboration with the local Churches and in the mission of the new evangelization.

9. The missionary spirit of the Congregation has paved the way for the banner of the Rogate to reach other Avignone Districts in the world to respond to the spiritual and material needs of the little ones and the poor. The gradual and steady growth in the number of Rogationist Religious, despite the stasis or decline in some Circumscriptions, has consolidated the "small plant" of the Congregation and has acquired an intercultural character. The same missionary spirit, inspired by the evangelical logic of freely giving what one has freely received, has also prompted new Rogationists to continue with zeal and readiness to take the charism all over the world.

10. Today, we are present both in places where Christians are a majority and where they are a minority; in vibrant Christian communities, as well as in those experiencing crises of faith; in places where Christianity has deep roots and where Christianity is still unknown. We are embedded in different socioeconomic environments, with the various needs and problems related to them.

11. The reception of Rogationists in these geographical areas and cultural contexts is a clear manifestation of the relevance of our charism. Embedded in the local Church and society, our charism, spirituality, and mission have acquired a contextualized cultural dimension with new understandings, expressions, and visibility. At the same time, our charism has enriched the life of the local Church and society.³ In several Circumscriptions, there have been notable contributions to vocation ministry, rooted in prayer, and the socio-educational apostolate, with presences in various organisms such as the Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious, and diocesan offices. In addition, our communities are creatively engaged especially in favor of the marginalized and more generally in the area of human promotion.

12. The social, political, and economic situation of our days is obviously very different from that experienced by St. Hannibal at the origins of the Work; but the compassion of the Heart of Jesus in front of the weary and exhausted sheep and the abundant harvest that is being lost, and the remedy the Lord gave to pray for evangelical laborers and the commitment to serve the little ones and the

² Cf. DI FRANZIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 398.

³ Cf. "*Seeing the crowds, he felt compassion for them and said, 'Rogate' Our Charismatic Identity in Today's Challenges*, Document of 12th General Chapter, Rome 2016, no. 57. From now on, this document will be cited as *Seeing the crowds*.

poor are never-changing Gospel values that continue to flow from the *Divine Command of the Rogate*.

The decentralization of the Congregation

13. The growth and development of the Institute through new foundations fostered the path of decentralization that the 7th General Chapter of 1986 decided to implement. We have moved from centralization to decentralization, thus making a significant change in the life of our Institute.

14. More than structural, decentralization is relational. More than organizational efficiency, it is openness to the creative movement of the Holy Spirit that inspires to embody the same charism in different historical and cultural environments.

15. The division of the Institute into parts (provinces, quasi-provinces, delegations) has fostered inculturation, streamlined the organizational and bureaucratic aspect, facilitated meetings between Superiors of Circumscription and Confreres, facilitated and encouraged insertion in the local Churches, stimulated apostolic responsibility and creativity, aroused vocational and economic autonomy, facilitated the spread of the charism, and fostered a deeper knowledge of the Founder's writings and Rogationist literature through their translation into various languages. However, decentralization, if not properly governed, can lead to division and the exaltation of partisan interests to the detriment of the good of the whole Institute; it can weaken the unity and hinder communication and a sense of belonging to the Congregation, forgetting that "the whole is greater than the part."⁴

Fruitfulness and the challenges of inculturation

16. The 12th General Chapter gave vigor to the dynamics of the path of inculturation of the charism with the logic of the Incarnation.⁵ Every cultural and social milieu can be fertile grounds to give the Rogationist Charism the opportunity to find new and unique ways to express itself more and more fully. But there is the need to overcome nostalgia for the past and to open ourselves to the breath of the Spirit; to free ourselves from ways of thinking and doing that have been superseded by history, even abandoning structures that have become an unsustainable burden, in order to look to the future with hope and creativity. We should seriously ask ourselves: are we open or resistant to the movements and impulses of the Holy Spirit, to encounter, dialogue, and collaboration with cultures, society, and the Church? Are we bold and creative in shifting our paradigms to be relevant here and now?

17. The process of inculturation has involved all Circumscriptions. Some communities are advancing in this endeavor, others are still in the initial stage. There is a need to understand more and more the necessity of inculturation to sustain the dynamic process by which our Charism reveals its evangelical richness, its ecclesial importance, and its authentic social value. However, we must recognize that it is not easy to cope with the rapid and sometimes radical changes in the Church and society that seem to challenge the understanding of the meaning of the Charism. This is why we encounter not a few difficulties in adequately expressing our Charism with the language and sensibility of today's social and cultural contexts.

18. Care must be taken to ensure that cultural expressions and ways of life assumed in one culture and historical context are not transported uncritically and simply reproduced in another cultural and social context. The path of inculturation is broader and more complex than mere repetition and duplication. This is why it is necessary to accompany the Confreres on the path of

⁴ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Vatican City 2013, no. 237.

⁵ Cf. *Seeing the crowds*, nos. 55-57.

understanding and inculturation of the charism not only during initial formation but above all, in ongoing formation.

The Rogationist prophetic mission

19. Through contemplation of the compassion of the Christ of the Rogate, obedience to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and following in the footsteps of St. Hannibal, we can live the Rogationist prophetic mission intensely and fully everywhere as men of prayer and charity. We live this vocational identity first of all by the witness of our religious consecration; by working to incarnate the presence of God, with the values of His Kingdom and in the service of man's transcendental vocation; by sharing together the following of Christ with a spirit of communion in the concreteness of fraternal life, welcomed not out of compulsion, but in the joys and labors of community life. Thus, let us make our community a house and a school of prayer where we read the signs of the times and respond to them as good laborers in any field that the Lord gives us; committing ourselves to make our house also a place and source of charity for all, especially for those who live in the peripheries of life.

20. The human family has certainly experienced a time of growth in recent years with the conquest of values and rights and with progress in the sciences. However, human society is deeply marked by worldliness, secularization, and the eclipse of God. Relationships are wounded by heavy forms of selfishness, which generate injustice, inequality, exploitation, poverty, loneliness, indifference, exclusion, division, and discrimination resulting in conflicts, violence, and wars.

21. Some of our communities often experience seemingly insurmountable challenges that are posed by changes in society and the Church. We experience a growing imbalance between the needs of the apostolate and the decreasing number of members, caused by the scarcity of new vocations and the growth in the median age of religious; the great demand for charitable services, and the restrictive state regulations. All this can lead to discouragement or settling for the bare minimum to survive; sometimes even resorting to what Pope Francis has called the hidden idols of spiritual worldliness, numbers, and functionalism.⁶ This is the occasion to open the eyes of the heart, as the Rogate pericope teaches us, and find the courage to offer the prophetic signs of hope that mankind awaits, starting with the concrete witness of Rogationist religious consecration, fraternal life, service to the little ones and the poor, and paving the way for those changes in structures and priorities that become indispensable.

Apostles of the Rogate

22. Recent General Chapters⁷ have deeply and extensively studied our identity rooted in the understanding and zeal of the Rogate, the Charism that the Holy Spirit gave to St. Hannibal for the building up of the Church and entrusted to us to continue to incarnate it in history. They reiterated the close connection between the charism and our way of living the evangelical counsels, fraternity, and mission. The Rogate is the source of fraternal communion in community because it brings us together into one body to implore in the Name of the Lord Jesus good laborers in the harvest, as He Himself commanded. "*Penetrating the pierced side of Jesus*" leads to an understanding and zeal of the Rogate that moves us to spread this prayer in various inculturated and creative ways. Our *rogation*, to be authentic, cannot remain indifferent to the Lord's interests but urges us to be willing to say, "Here I am, send me."

⁶ Cf. FRANCIS, *Homily at the Mass of Chrism*, Holy Thursday, Vatican City April 14, 2022.

⁷ *Apostles of the Rogate. The Mission of the Rogationists at the beginning of the 3rd millennium*. Document of the 10th General Chapter of 2004; "*Seeing the crowds, he felt compassion for them and said, 'Rogate'.*" *Our charismatic identity in today's challenges*, Document of the 12th General Chapter of 2016.

23. The Church recognizes us as Apostles of the Rogate and expects us to radiate this aspect of the life and mission of the Lord in the contemporary world. We must continue and consolidate our specific apostolate of praying for good laborers in collaboration with the local Church, ecclesial bodies, and Conferences of Religious. In this service, the Rogate Vocations Centers remain ever valuable in producing prayer aids, stimulating discussions and reflections, even by means of social communication, organizing conferences and forums, collaborating in the preparation and celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, promoting the parish, diocesan or national vocation month or week, and other similar initiatives. In some of our Circumscriptions, the Rogate Vocation Center works side by side with the Institute of Vocation Ministry to bring the discourse of the Rogate Apostolate and the centrality of prayer to the world of culture, formation, and education, even in the academic realms, of those working in the field of vocation ministry and formation. This area of pastoral care in the Church is felt more than ever and the service rendered in this field is warmly received and appreciated. It is a contribution that, as Rogationists, we are called to offer on the front line.

24. Centers of spirituality, houses of prayer, and communities dedicated to contemplative prayer are other services closely related to the apostolate of the Rogate because they offer an environment to propose initiatives for prayer, vocation discernment, and the deepening of a prayer-based vocation ministry, as well as for the ongoing formation of the Rogate Family. This particular form of apostolate should be promoted and supported in the Circumscriptions where it exists. Where it does not yet exist, the possibilities of introducing it should be discerned, should the conditions be ripe.

25. St. Hannibal's charismatic inspiration and apostolic passion actively involved clergy and laity in a crusade of prayer in obedience to the command of the Rogate and its spread, thus indicating another aspect of the Apostolate of the Rogate. The revitalization of the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV) and the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (USPV)⁸ should be coupled with raising the awareness of Rogationists about the historical and current relevance of these associations. Some Circumscriptions are introducing them into their contexts; others are reviving them. Along the continuing journey of the Congregation, other Rogate-inspired associations have sprung up among the laity and clergy. As we continue to be inserted in new geographical and cultural areas, new forms of adherence to the charism can be envisioned.

26. The Confreres' responses to the questionnaire revealed a broad acceptance of the primacy of the Apostolate of the Rogate among our apostolic works and commitments. However, this primacy does not seem to be concretely reflected in the current state of affairs, especially with regard to the disproportionate number of personnel dedicated to it, compared to other areas of apostolate. The problem of sufficient and qualified personnel is amplified in this field since specific training and preparation are required. There are efforts to integrate the Apostolate of the Rogate into the formation program, especially in the Philosophical and Theological Center of Studies, both in lessons and apostolic involvement. It must be recognized that much more needs to be done so that the Confreres will naturally identify this as the "specific apostolate" of the Rogationists and learn to give it the due priority, while also making themselves available to engage zealously in this ministry.

Laborers in the harvest

27. The obedience to the Gospel command of the Rogate and spreading it are intrinsically linked to being laborers of the harvest. Works of charity and mercy for the benefit of others are the "legitimate and immediate consequence" of our fourth vow."⁹

⁸ Cf. MEZZARI A. and SALEMI T., *Joint Circular Letter on Criteria for New Statutes of the UPV and USPV*, in *Bolletino* 93, no. 4 (2014) pp. 292-300.

⁹ Cf. DI FRANZIA, A., *Preziose adesioni* [1901], p. 6; *Scritti*, vol. 61 [02176].

28. The experience of our history attests to our constant commitment both as men of prayer and as men of charity according to the Lord's two imperatives, "*Rogate*" (Lk 10:2) and "*Ite*" (Lk 10:3). We have committed ourselves as "laborers in the great harvest of the Lord" and "shepherds of the helpless and weary flock" in many forms according to the signs of the times and the concrete needs of the territory.

29. We maintain our apostolic commitment to the integral promotion of every person, with preferential love for the poor and the little ones whom our Founder considered the *tender harvest*. We express this in the traditional historical forms of orphanages, vocational schools, education, instruction, and evangelization.

30. In addition, new forms of apostolate have emerged in response to changing social contexts, such as "casa famiglia" and social welfare centers; sheltering refugees, foreign migrants, street children, and the homeless; soup kitchens, clinics, clothing, hygiene, and housing; long-distance adoption, scholarships, livelihood programs, and housing projects; religious community inserted in poor neighborhoods for the empowerment of the poor who live there; and care and advocacy for indigenous peoples.

31. The pastoral responsibility of parishes and shrines entrusted to Rogationists has offered us environments in which the two icons of the Charism can flourish: the inspiration of the *Rogate* and the encounter with *Zancone*. These are centers of charismatic irradiation, for the fervor of prayer for vocations, the sensitivity to the care of the most vulnerable, the commitment to pastoral care attentive to the promotion of the laity, and the development of associations linked to the Rogationist family.¹⁰

32. We have also witnessed many send-offs of Confreres who leave their homeland and go on missions either to the poor and remote countryside or to large urban centers, both in non-Christian and Christian communities.

New wine in new wineskins¹¹

33. The conditions of society and the Church will continue to change, and new demands will emerge. This requires constant discernment on our part and openness to the impulses of the Holy Spirit, for it is he who determines our path and not the situation in which we find ourselves.

34. The compassion of the Christ of the Rogate toward the *great harvest* and the *helpless flock* is always alive and relevant. It constitutes our prism for seeing new approaches and ways of carrying out our apostolate and mission. Many Confreres in their responses to the questionnaire pointed out the temptation of getting stuck in nostalgia for a glorious past, of being content with doing the minimum required, of nesting in *comfort zones*, of having relationships based on management standards rather than fraternal communion, and even of getting stuck within visions of personal thoughts and practices. However, there is also a sincere desire to rekindle the zeal to be laborers in the harvest, rooted in the compassion of the Lord, moved by the Spirit wherever it blows, and respond to the demands of the present milieu with the "creativity and fantasy of charity," just as St. Hannibal did in his.

35. Adaptation to change and renewal in Rogationist religious life are not only in the area of apostolate and mission but are equally true in relational patterns in community life, service of authority, and formation choices.

¹⁰ Cf. *The Rogationist mission in parishes and shrines*, Rome 2022.

¹¹ The adaptation and renewal of consecrated life to changing realities are the main themes of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) document, *New wine in new wineskins*, Rome 2017.

Intercultural communities

36. The internationalization of the Congregation has led to an intercultural composition of communities that reflects today's globalized and multicultural society. At present this is particularly evident in our houses of formation and mission stations, but it will become the emerging trend in our communities in the near future as more and more exchanges of Confreres between Circumscriptions are expected in view of shared projects. However, a mere staying together among Confreres of different cultural backgrounds, without "sympathetic hospitality,"¹² a culture of encounter and respect and mutual acceptance, does not automatically translate into joyful community life and fruitfulness in mission. Intercultural community life is a privileged place of rich inculturation of the charism and concrete witness of fraternity, apostolic collaboration, and governance of the Institute. It frees one from the condition of closure in one's own cultural mentality, potential rejection of the other, and isolation. The relational dynamics involved in seeking together the essential elements of the charism, as an element of unity within the rich cultural diversity of the members, are complex and require openness, time, goodwill, patience, commitment, and a precise itinerary. Therefore, the formation of the necessary cultural intelligence and skills should be an integral part of initial and ongoing formation.

Intergenerationality and integration

37. The composition of the Congregation is varied. Some Circumscriptions grow steadily in vocations and maintain the young median age of members, while others, which in the past sent many missionaries, decrease in number, and consequently the median age steadily increases. The sense of belonging to the same religious family motivates the exchange of Confreres between Circumscriptions, thus accelerating not only the increase of intercultural communities but also intergenerational communities. Although not new, communities composed of different generations with significant generation gaps pose both challenges and opportunities for new ways of community life, new spiritual experiences, and new forms of mission.

38. Here, too, the initial and ongoing formation is a key element. Harmonious coexistence, respect for tradition, and its continuity often clash with the need for renewal in the apostolate and innovation in some practices.¹³ Creating structures and instances that promote dialogue and interaction, stimulating the passing on of responsibility to future generations, without offending the opinion and contribution of those who came before, puts us in front of the problem of generational integration.¹⁴ Seniority, which is valued in different ways in different cultures, must be critically read in the light of Gospel values. The creation of communities based on the same age group should be avoided because it impoverishes community life and creates barriers to coexistence among different ages. Instead, intergenerational communities should be encouraged as much as possible because it fosters the transmission of charismatic inheritance among different age groups and is good for religious life. Older religious can witness to younger religious the security, wisdom, joy, and sense of belonging to Rogationist religious life and, at the same time, younger religious can communicate enthusiasm, dynamism, and creativity.

39. The advancement in the age of Confreres is more pronounced in the Italian Circumscriptions, but this is a natural path we all must take. There arises here the need to grow old gracefully, side by side with the weakening in physical and mental health. Some communities are able to integrate sick and elderly members with care and attention; others, however, lack the conditions to do the same. It must be the abiding concern of Circumscriptions experiencing this

¹² *New wine new wineskins*, no. 40.

¹³ Cf. *New wine new wineskins*, no. 46.

¹⁴ Cf. FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, Vatican City 2020, no. 199.

situation or anticipating it to offer the sick and elderly Confreres a serene environment and a decent quality of religious life. For this, it will be necessary to make provisions for finding funds and facilities for old-age retirement and health care needs.

The gift of faithfulness and the joy of perseverance¹⁵

40. The recent document *The gift of fidelity the joy of perseverance* invites an in-depth examination of the challenge to be faithful to one's religious vocation within today's "culture of the provisional": vocational fragility, loss of meaning of religious life, and eventual abandonment. This troubling reality is also experienced in our Congregation. Apart from the cases of abandonment of those in initial formation, what is even more disturbing is the estrangement of those already in ongoing formation, especially by those who are just in the first years of their ministry. This directly poses an interrogation to our formation program, the quality of our fraternal life, and apostolic commitment. This urges us to put in place preventive interventions and, above all, to take care of the necessary accompaniment in both initial and ongoing formation to safeguard the gift of fidelity and joyful perseverance, lest the Confrere falls into a life of mere survival.

Economy at the service of charism and mission¹⁶

41. The global economic crisis touches everyone, but especially ordinary people and us as well. The sharing amidst the poverty and needs in the Church of Jerusalem in the time of St. Paul and in the Avignone District in the time of St. Hannibal, shows that the faithful observance of the evangelical counsel of poverty is a prophetic and hopeful sign for our times when lived both in material and spiritual ways, with individual and communal gestures.

42. Many Confreres and communities, especially through their daily contact with the poor and the most fragile in society, experience the economic crisis in an existential way. The situation has offered an opportunity to return to the fundamentals of religious life and community, rethinking and adapting the economy by putting it in the service of charism and mission, with a more sober lifestyle in solidarity with the majority of the population, stimulating creative ways of joyful sharing by working together with solicitude, responsible commitment, and transparent prudence.

43. It cannot be denied, however, that we also encounter resistance to the necessary changes in ways of acting and thinking because of a mentality that is concerned more with the preservation of goods and a comfortable lifestyle, in contrast to the freedom of the Spirit and the creativity of mission. The temptation to enclose oneself within the confines and concerns of one's own community or Circumscription remains present, evidenced by indifference and lack of solidarity with other members of our religious family, as well as in the unequal distribution of resources.

A Synodal Church

44. The current journey of the Synod on Synodality has deepened awareness of the fundamental vocation of the Church as a people of God walking together. Pope Francis, in his message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations,¹⁷ reiterated that we are not only called as individuals, but we are also called as a people. Like all followers of Christ, every Christian is a missionary disciple,

¹⁵ CICLSAL, *The gift of fidelity the joy of perseverance*, Rome 2020.

¹⁶ CICLSAL, *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, Rome 2018.

¹⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, *Message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, May 8, 2022.

and every baptized person is sent.¹⁸ Each one is a protagonist, willing to listen attentively to God and to others with a spirit of discernment. The first step to starting this journey is the conversion of heart and mind.

45. Synodality concretely means sharing and is expressed in participation, involvement, and co-responsibility. No one is excluded; no one can pull out and stand on the sidelines and be just a spectator. The apostle Paul reminds us that "to each one is given a particular manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). Therefore, everyone must responsibly seek to put to good use "the spiritual gifts which the Spirit bestows within the People of God for the building up of the one Body of Christ."¹⁹

46. Synodality is the Church's prophetic response to the globalized and contradictory society of our time because it helps to recover the vision of *walking together* as the *constitutive way of the Church* and "a sign and instrument of all humanity is called to be."²⁰ This figure allows us to interpret reality with God's eyes and heart; it offers the *condition* for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. (...) Only with this light can we face the complexity of this time.²¹

47. The synodal journey of the Church is also the synodal journey of our Congregation in the common constant search. It is our journey in fraternal contemplation of the Christ of the Rogate, which brings us back to the foundation of our identity and spurs us on to creatively respond to the needs of the great harvest and the tired sheep in the new existential Avignonnes of our times.

¹⁸ Cf. The theme of the extraordinary missionary month of October 2019.

¹⁹ INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, Preliminary Note, Rome 2018, no. 18.

²⁰ FRANCIS, *Message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, Rome May 8, 2022.

²¹ Cf. FRANCIS, *Greeting at the opening of the work of the 70th General Assembly of the CEI*, Rome May 22, 2017.

PART TWO

THE PATH OF UNITY

Sequela Christi. Our Christian identity

48. By virtue of Baptism, all Christians have a common vocation to follow Christ, the *cornerstone* that unites all believers. By religious consecration, in virtue of the evangelical counsels, this following of Christ finds expression in the faithful observance of the vows, lived in fraternal communion and in dedication to the mission. Our Christian identity is marked by our religious state, which “manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below [...], foretells the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom [...] and manifests that the Kingdom of God and its needs, in a very special way, are raised above all earthly considerations.”²²

49. Our *sequela Christi* is an *imitatio Christi*, because consecrated life, by the impulse of the Holy Spirit, constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the Church of the way of life which Jesus, the supreme Consecrated One and missionary of the Father for the sake of his Kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples.²³ We are united as consecrated men through the evangelical counsels, which in turn unites us with the Church as its eschatological witnesses.

Following the Christ of the Rogate. Our charismatic identity

50. Our *sequela*, as Rogationists, is characterized by *following the Christ of the Rogate*. His actions, feelings, and concerns are expressed in the pericope of Matthew's Gospel (Mt 9:35-38). Jesus was on a journey teaching, preaching, and healing all kinds of illnesses. The tired and weary crowd that eagerly awaited the fulfillment of the Kingdom moved him to compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. With this reality before his eyes, Jesus commanded, “*Rogate ergo*” – the word, whose understanding and zeal mark our charism.²⁴

51. The 12th General Chapter went very deep into the theme of our charism as the unifying element of the Congregation. The charism identifies our specific spirituality, fraternal communion, consecration, and mission in the Church. The expressions of the Congregation's presence and apostolic commitments in various socio-cultural and geographical contexts, as well as generational diversities, have made diversity more evident. While welcoming and celebrating differences, which enrich the charism, it is equally important to promote unity and communion. For this, the charism must be welcomed and deepened in a “*contemplative*” way - rooted in and sustained by prayer - so that its understanding is truly grounded in the compassion of Jesus and the obedience to his command. An indispensable element for this is fraternal life in community, as the primary habitat where the charism is lived and deepened and where it becomes a point of unity among the diversity of members. Likewise, it is the community, through its witnessing, services, and apostolate that makes it possible for the charism to radiate naturally and lead others to share in the same charism and spirituality of the Congregation and get involved in its mission.

²² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen gentium*, no. 44.

²³ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, no. 22.

²⁴ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 2.

Founder and Father

52. Another point of reference for Rogationist unity and identity is St. Hannibal Mary, our Founder and Father. We are bound to each other as his spiritual children, heirs of his precious legacy. His example is our constant inspiration. We walk in his footsteps in following the Christ of the Rogate to be configured to the sentiments of the Lord of the harvest and re-propose them in the contemporary world. The understanding of the Rogate can never be disassociated from our Father Founder: he was the one who received the original inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, constantly revisiting and studying his life, spiritual and apostolic experience, and teachings is a fundamental requirement.

53. The study of Father Founder involves not only the conceptual and cultural level (his writings, historical circumstances, etc.) but above all, it aims at fostering in us his sensitivity and obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, we will not simply replicate in our own time the efforts and language of the Founder's response to the needs of his time, but we will enter, just as he did, into the dynamism of discernment and contemplation to understand how our charism can respond to the challenges of the here and now.

Prayer, the centerpiece of unity

54. Prayer is the privileged expression of our unity and communion with the Holy Trinity and with each other. We are gathered in the Name of Jesus. He is in our midst. He prays in us, with us, and for us. Our prayer is thus made pleasing to the Father. This communion with Him, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows how our vocation as baptized and Rogationist religious constitutes us as a charismatic family, called and sent by the Christ of the Rogate. In prayer, we strengthen our identity and mission.

55. Prayer is a fundamental and distinctive mark of the Christian community from apostolic times (cf. Acts 2:41-47) until today. For us, the very name "Rogationists" qualifies us and indicates how prayer is at the center of our identity; it makes us continuous living prayer (*orante*) to obtain from God's mercy holy laborers in the Lord's harvest. The rhythm of our daily life is marked by personal and communal prayer; through it, we are united with Jesus, with his prayer and mission. Unity in prayer is realized not simply in voices, but especially in intentions and concerns. It goes beyond the physical space and time of community prayers and extends to our fraternity, service, ministry, and apostolate. In other words, prayer becomes the centerpiece of unity. The quality of our prayer in the spirit of the Rogate is the measure of our identity as Rogationists.

56. Our Father and Founder taught us that "just as a burning coal goes out if it remains alone,"²⁵ so any flame, including that of the charism if it is not guarded and nurtured in an atmosphere of unity, runs the risk of being extinguished; or, more precisely we run the risk of being extinguished, and the Rogate will be entrusted to other hands.²⁶ We thus understand that unity, coordination, and sharing are essential aspects to achieve any common goal. Prayer is the starting point that qualifies a community because the prayer of a divided community, of a torn body, does not penetrate the clouds, does not reach the Father, even if it does not move him to indignation.²⁷

²⁵ DI FRANCA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. 57, p. 96.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁷ Cf. DI FRANCA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 325.

The Word of God: unity, communion, solidarity

57. The Sacred Scriptures are central to the life of the Church. They reveal God's salvific plan which reaches its climax with the incarnation of the Word within the confines of human history. *Et Verbo caro factum est et habitavit in nobis* (Jn 1:14). The Word of God, as *viaticum*, has always accompanied and nourished the Church on her earthly pilgrimage to the eternal homeland in heaven.

58. Jesus, the Word made flesh, through his words and actions, reveals what is in the heart of God, which is why the divine Word of the Rogate reveals the interests of the Heart of Jesus for the salvation of souls. In the contemplation of the Gospel of the Rogate, St. Hannibal penetrated the secret of this divine command and dedicated his life to the salvation of souls. The Rogationists, as children of the same Founder, have in the Rogate the origin, foundation, and objective of their unity. The origin because the Rogate is the Word by which God has summoned us to be with Him; the foundation because by it God continually summons us to be with Him; and the goal because by it we are sent out to evangelize (cf. Mk 3:13-15).²⁸ As God assembles His People through the revelation of His Word, so does the revelation of the Divine Word of the Rogate summons and unites us as Rogationists.

59. The Word of God unites believers and makes them one people.²⁹ It is a door that leads to communion, in a particular way when it is read in the liturgical celebration. Equally, we recognize its richness whenever we read it individually or in common, and when we meditate on it frequently. From it, we draw inspiration to be true laborers of the Gospel who promote solidarity and not division. It would be a counter-witness and a betrayal of our vocation if we, as laborers of the Gospel, having received the mandate of the Rogate, live by fomenting divisions and quarrels, thus, making the *rogation* in vain.³⁰

The Eucharist, the bond of unity

60. The path to welcoming, preserving, and nourishing unity among us is already marked out and we journey in it every day in the Eucharistic Celebration, as St. John Paul II reminds us: "Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia, docile to the teachings of the divine Master and interiorly guided by the impulses of the Spirit, brought out those conditions and characteristics of this *prayer* [= *rogate*] that make it an *ecclesial work par excellence* and a source of abundant fruit for the Church and the world. In the first place, the placing of the *Most Holy Eucharist at the center* of personal and community existence, in order to learn from it to pray and to love according to the Heart of Christ, to unite the offering of one's own life to the offering that He makes of His own, continuing to intercede for us before the Father (cf. Heb 7:25; 9:24). Following the Founder's example, may every member of the Rogationist Family be a profoundly Eucharistic soul!"³¹

61. The Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life, is the model of Christian prayer and is, at the same time, an experience of unity manifested and strengthened by words, gestures, and postures of the body. In the Eucharistic celebration, God takes the initiative, summons us, and brings us together to mold us into one Body.³² Unity, before being a goal to be achieved, is a gift to be welcomed and cherished: "We form here, assembled together, one body: away

²⁸ Cf. *Called to be with Him. The primacy of the spiritual life*. Document of the 9th General Chapter of 1998.

²⁹ FRANCIS, *Aperuit illis*, Apostolic Letter in the form of Motu Proprio, Vatican City 2019, no. 4.

³⁰ By the word *rogation*, the Founder means both the response to the Rogate, commonly referred to as the *prayer for good laborers*, and the *institution* that welcomes, cherishes, and spreads it.

³¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the Rogationists on the occasion of the centenary of their foundation*, May 16, 1997, no. 4.

³² Cf. *Roman Missal*, New edition 2020, p. 137.

with divisions among ourselves; away with evil strife, away with quarrels, and let Christ God reign among us."³³ The sacrament of the Eucharist is for us "a sign of unity and a bond of charity."³⁴ By Eucharistic communion, we are made partakers of one bread and one cup. United with Christ in one body, we joyfully bear the fruits of eternal life for the salvation of the world.³⁵

62. Precisely because it is a sacrament and a school of love, the Eucharist is a sacrament that builds up, expresses, strengthens, and increases unity. The *fractio panis* is a sign of sharing and fraternal communion. United among ourselves and to the assembly of Angels and Saints, *with one voice* we profess the same faith, we say the same words of praise, supplication, forgiveness, and thanksgiving. "Now there is no one who does not know that Love tends to Union. This is the main purpose for which Jesus became food: to unite Himself to mankind. (...) here you observe the most joyful mystery (...) Jesus Christ is transfused into us. What more *intimate union*? This *Union* was the purpose of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist; and since all the works of Jesus Christ were directed to this union, thus, all the Works were directed to the Eucharistic table, as the ultimate goal!"³⁶ The Eucharistic union, therefore, "is that which gives life and existence, increase, fruitfulness, and stability to a religious Institution."³⁷

63. Without unity in the name of Christ, it is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist.³⁸ Among the obstacles to unity, the Holy Founder recalls the party spirit: "Woe when two or three agree secretly or openly to oppose authority in order to discredit the other brothers, and murmur, and disapprove, and conspire, and proselytize. Then it happens that different parties are formed, and the word of the Gospel comes true: '*Regnum divisum desolabitur*' [Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste] (Mt 12:25)." ³⁹

Rogationist spirituality

64. Rogationist spirituality, a living heritage shared by the Rogate Family, is deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Church and is nourished by the unique and pure light of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Just as Jesus throughout his earthly life was led by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Father's mission, so too the Rogationists will be led by the Spirit of the Rogate in their Works, and the Rogationist spiritual life will be the perennial source and nourishment of their apostolate, as St. Hannibal did and taught. The Charism of the Rogate, in fact, is a particular experience of God lived in the Holy Spirit and is expressed in a specific spirituality, which is typically biblical and Eucharistic.

65. The liturgical year of the Church, which unfolds the different mysteries of our faith in ordinary time and in strong seasons, marks the rhythm of our spiritual life and of our Rogationist prayer. Thus, while praying with the Church as members of the one Body of Christ, united to Him, Head and Shepherd, we also pray as Rogationists.⁴¹ The Liturgical Proper of the Family of the Rogate, the Congregation's Prayer Manual, *Rogate...* (2022), and our own way of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, create a true union among us, even though the prayer

³³ *Roman Missal*, Antiphon to the Washing of the Feet, p. 139.

³⁴ *Roman Missal*, p. 625.

³⁵ Cf. *Roman Missal*, p. 267.

³⁶ DI FRANZIA, A. *Scritti*, typescript vol. 12, pp. 24-25.

³⁷ DI FRANZIA, A. *Scritti*, typescript vol. 1, p. 11.

³⁸ *Missale Romano*, p. 326: Pray, brothers and sisters, that this our family, gathered by the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ, may offer a sacrifice pleasing to God the Father Almighty.

³⁹ DI FRANZIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 76.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2684.

⁴¹ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 19.

is expressed in different languages, times, and places. It offers a Rogationist fragrance to the incense of the Church's worship.

The Rogationist mission

66. The Lord Jesus first called the disciples to *be with him* (cf. Mk 3:13), commanded them to *pray* to the Lord of the Harvest (cf. Mt 9:38, Lk 10:2), then *sent* them forth to be on a mission to announce in words and deeds that the Kingdom of God is at hand (cf. Mt 10:5.11, Lk 10:3.7).

67. The contemplative-existential reading of the Rogate pericope in Mt 9:35-38 transports us inside the heart of the Christ of the Rogate, whose compassionate gaze is directed toward the tired and exhausted sheep. Our sharing in the same gaze of the Lord leads us to see the three components of the Rogationist mission as intrinsically united and enables us to overcome seeing them as separate compartments. Thus, our specific mission in the Church is the firm foundation of our unity. The threefold dimension of the one Rogationist mission, summarized in the verbs *praying*, *spreading*, and *being*, opens wide to limitless possibilities of apostolic services according to the signs of the times.

68. Praying daily for vocations, in response to Christ's command of the Rogate, is a fundamental element of our mission. The understanding of this command of prayer is the natural source of the zeal that impels us to be its heralds and propagators. This, too, is an essential part of our mission. The authentic prayer for the Gospel laborers and the commitment to its spread necessarily impel us to be zealous laborers in the Lord's harvest. We all share the one mission of *being* Rogationists, expressed in the different forms of *doing* our particular tasks.

The Rule of Life and the service of authority

69. The fundamental *Rule of Life* is the Gospel of Christ, "lamp and light" (Ps 119:105) that guides the pilgrimage to holiness of all who follow it, regardless of culture, place, and time. Our Rogationist *Rule of Life*, *Constitutions* and *Norms*, as well as their inculturation in the Directory of Circumscriptions, find their root and inspiration in Gospel values that are concretely lived with "creative fidelity" in daily reality. The theme of the 11th General Chapter of 2010 thus summarizes the unifying role of the Rule of Rogationist Life: *expression of consecration, guarantee of charismatic identity, support of fraternal communion, and project of mission*.

70. The current physiognomy of the Congregation, which reflects a diversity of cultures and generations among the Confreres with a diversity of convictions and behaviors, makes it almost problematic to formulate a *Rule of Life* shared and embraced by all members of a religious institution.⁴² Moreover, it has been observed that the *Rule of Life* is still unknown to many Confreres and therefore used very little. This is where the service of authority comes in, whose particular task is to guide communities in building fraternal life in community, in which each member shares his giftedness and responsibilities in living the religious consecration meaningfully and fruitfully, as a common project in the richness of diversity. Those in authority have the task of ensuring a "*renewed reference to the Rule*", in the spiritual and practical dimensions, especially in these times of rapid and convulsive change. The *Rule* is necessary and indispensable if one is to remain anchored in the original charismatic inspiration. Indeed, in it "is contained an itinerary of the following of Christ, qualified by a specific charism

⁴² Cf. *The Rule of Life*. Document of the 11th General Chapter of 2010, no. 5.

authenticated by the Church."⁴³ Given the importance of the *Rule of Life*, it must be studied, meditated upon, valued, and put into practice in all its dimensions.

Formation

71. The ultimate goal of the initial and ongoing formation of Rogationists is the gradual and constant growth in the Christ of the Rogate, in order to conform oneself to his sentiments and attitudes (cf. Phil 2:5), living with joyful fidelity as a Religious vowed and consecrated for a specific mission. This formative itinerary is a lifelong process and commitment. It is essential, therefore, to be formed in the art and practice of discernment that renders us not just docile and resigned, but *docibiles*, always humbly tending toward conversion, eagerly open to learning and to the impulses of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

72. The care of formation is a primary responsibility of every Confrere. It is the duty of the competent authority to accompany, animate, and responsibly guide the steps of the formative journey in both initial and ongoing formation. Indeed, the formation of members must be constantly safeguarded and nurtured because the present and future of the Congregation, as well as its proper renewal, depends on it.⁴⁵

73. The historical journey of the Congregation and its spread in different geographical and cultural contexts has increased the demand for the adaptation and renewal of Rogationist religious life, especially in formation. There is a natural diversity in the itineraries and ways of implementing formation in the various Circumscriptions. However, it is essential to harmonize and balance diversity with the unity of common charismatic, spiritual, and apostolic contents within the whole Congregation, as outlined in the *Ratio Institutionis*. This provides the fundamental principles, objectives, means, and framework of content in the various stages of Rogationist formation that is common to all. The *Directory or Formation Manual of the Circumscriptions* is the inculturation in their respective concrete contexts of the common formation principles of the *Ratio*.

74. The renewal, adaptation, and inculturation of formation in ever-changing contexts are dynamic processes that presuppose the "constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the Institutes."⁴⁶ Those entrusted with the service of authority, at the general and Circumscription levels, and formation teams assume a key role in ensuring and promoting unity in the diversity of formation itineraries. Formators are called to be "companions," "guides," and "interpreters" of the "sources and original spirit of the Institute" to be transmitted to new generations of Rogationists. Therefore, the selection, ongoing formation, accompaniment, and guidance of formators are of the utmost importance.

75. The ongoing formation is a personal commitment to deepening one's Rogationist identity, rooted in the charism. It is first and foremost the daily search for personal integration and self-realization in the Rogationist consecration, fraternal life in community, and apostolic service in concrete instances and the different life stages and transitions. More intense and occasional experiences of formation, such as updating courses, further studies, or particular experiences complement the ordinary means. Ongoing formation is the antidote to an identity crisis, loss of meaning, regression, and fragmentation.

⁴³ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, no. 37.

⁴⁴ Cf. *New wine new wineskins*, no. 35.

⁴⁵ Cf. CICLSAL, *Potissimum institutioni*, Vatican City 1990, no. 1.

⁴⁶ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Perfectae caritatis*, no. 2.

PART THREE

THE PATH OF SHARING

The Rogationist synodal path

76. Our Congregation, in step with the synodal journey of the Church, grows in unity, coordination, and sharing, and seeks to incarnate the charism in the various socio-cultural contexts in which the Lord sends it. Indeed, in synodality, the Church recognizes "the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly, and take an active part in her evangelizing mission."⁴⁷ The Rogationist synodal journey is expressed in the commitment to the careful listening to the Holy Spirit, fidelity to the teachings of the Church, and, at the same time, creativity, in order to discover and set into motion the most suitable instrument for the ordered participation of all, for the mutual exchange of gifts, for an incisive reading of the signs of the times, and for effective planning for the mission.⁴⁸

77. In a world that exalts individualism and the centralization of everything in the individual person, to the detriment of the community, the service of authority and the sharing of responsibility are perhaps the most visible aspects of the necessary redemption and commitment in the constitution of the identity of religious life in today's world. There is a need to recover this important *diakonia* within Consecrated Life, moving away from its extremes: the simple desire for power and the pursuit of *status*, or on the other side, the renunciation of responsibility and indifference to any form of common good, which is very prevalent today.

78. The Rogationist synodal journey, like that of the whole Church, requires conversion. In some situations, conversion implies both the personal and community levels. Some communities have settled into a comfort zone, with a lifestyle that seeks stable tranquility, indifferent to others, closed to creativity, freedom of the Spirit, and collaboration with others. "A leveled community life that does not leave room for originality, responsibility and cordial fraternal relationships, results in little sharing in real life."⁴⁹

79. History shows that the centralization of decisions in the hands of a few, without adequate shared responsibility and planning, has often been the cause of choices that have endangered not only the mission and assets but the very survival of the Institutes.⁵⁰

80. The perseverance and faithfulness in the Rogationists' synodical journey can be a powerful prophetic sign for the Church and the world that shows how God's original plan for the family of humankind can be realized.

Rogationist communion and community

81. The theme "unity, coordination, and sharing," in addition to the institutional issues of our Rule of Life, involves communion in the daily life of communities. It is of fundamental importance that our Congregation is truly a "community"; that is, a privileged space to manifest our charismatic unity, fraternal sharing, and a common mission. The concepts of "community" and "communion" shed light on the theological and ecclesial reality of Consecrated Life.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, no. 43.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 76.

⁴⁹ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 26.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, nos. 3, 18, 33, 58.

⁵¹ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, no. 42.

They give meaning both to the informal and daily moments of fraternal life and to the organizations and structures that govern Rogationist religious life. Communion and community form one and the same reality; they express our identity and rhythm of life.

82. Our communities have meetings and councils, which are the ordinary expression of their synodal life. These moments of listening, dialogue, planning, and sharing among confreres build our "fraternal life". Assemblies and Councils (House, Family, and Formation Councils), together with the role of the Superior, are grounded in the Gospel and the tradition of our religious family. These are moments of ordinary and ongoing formation. In them, with the help of the Spirit, we seek to discern together God's will for the good of all, faithful to the vocation we have received. They also aim to achieve a lifestyle marked by fraternity, harmony, and mutual collaboration for the common mission; they are not mere instruments of organizational efficiency.

Fraternity and the service of authority

83. Authority today is understood more as "service". The shift from the centrality of the role of authority to that of the dynamics of fraternal life is being realized.⁵² These require overcoming the mentality of one against the other and moving toward the building of authentic co-responsibility.⁵³ Authority, lived as a service, shows its synodal face when it aims to involve and empower, and not exclude, the Confreres, making them participate in common goals and responsibilities.⁵⁴

84. By walking with this synodal style of fraternal life in community, new models of relationships, more humane and less bureaucratic, more evangelical and less functional, can be creatively realized. "The challenge is the responsible sharing of a common project, overcoming the mere execution of obedience that does not serve the Gospel."⁵⁵ For the smooth development of the daily activities of communities, it is essential to be inspired by the new models of relationships,⁵⁶ recovering Gospel ideals as the main source of inspiration (cf. Jn 15:15).⁵⁷

85. The superior has an important role in community leadership in awakening co-responsibility in the conscience of the Confreres. "Those who exercise power should not encourage infantile attitudes that can lead to non-responsible behavior."⁵⁸ In general, except for a few situations, the responses to the questionnaire give the impression that authority is not a centralized power in the hands of a single person, who takes all decisions upon himself, but is lived in a collegial form and seeks dialogue and listening to the Confreres. Certainly, the path of integration of the Confreres needs to be improved, opening channels of listening and involvement, where everyone feels co-responsible for the different instances of Rogationist religious life.

86. In some situations, there are significant objective difficulties in the succession of superiors, both because of the limited number of Confreres and their qualifications. In some Circumscriptions, the challenges of aging and health, as well as the lack of academic qualifications required by state regulations, make the turnover of office difficult. In some

⁵² *New wine new wineskins*, no. 41.

⁵³ Cf. CICALSAL, *The service of authority and obedience*, Vatican City 2008, no. 17.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 131.

⁵⁵ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 42.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 22.

⁵⁷ Cf. RAMPAZZO, B. *Our fraternal communion of life with Christ and the Poor*. Rome 2021. Father General develops the theme of fraternity as a fundamental element of Rogationist religious consecration and mission.

⁵⁸ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 21.

Circumscriptions, especially young and emerging ones, there is still a need for experience, guidance, and continuing formation.

87. It is healthy for the life of the community, and of each religious in particular, that we avoid the duration of the term of responsibility in the hands of the same person and with the same office for a long time. Alternatives in the leadership and coordination of the community should be promoted, as provided for in our Rule of Life,⁵⁹ overcoming insecurities, distrust, and fear.

Fragmentation and loss of identity

88. In some communities where, for different reasons, such as excess of activity, indifference, lack of a spirit of belonging, or difficulties in communication, Religious live very far from the spirit of communion and reciprocity. The 13th General Chapter will be an opportune time to review the structures and modalities of common life to reaffirm what corresponds with Rogationist religious life and to correct what is not.

89. Not seldom, our meetings, formation, planning sessions, and assemblies are done simply out of necessity or because they are required by our regulations and directives. Thus, projects and decisions remain on paper, creating a gulf between what is planned and what is actually lived. Situations such as these do not create harmony or fraternity, nor do they capture the real needs of Circumscriptions, communities, and the individual religious, but generate weariness, fatigue, and indifference. We must avoid the risk of falling into a bureaucratic and institutional routine, emptying institutional relations among Circumscriptions, Communities, and individual religious of meaning with the risk of the loss of credibility of the role that such institutional mediations play for the good of religious life. Discovering the institutional and human causes of this and making clear proposals to overcome them is a commitment to the reflection of our General Chapter.

Decentralization and Circumscriptions

90. To foster the development of the Congregation in the world, it was necessary to implement decentralization of authority and economy. Indeed, in the path of growth and development of a religious institute, decentralization is not an option, but a necessity that cannot be done without.

91. The success of this path of decentralization comes when a constant balance is maintained between the central authority, the guarantor of the unity and communion of the whole body, and the peripheral realities that promote and embody the charism in a specific geographical and cultural context. In order to achieve their goals, the Circumscriptions must possess "just autonomy," but also walk together in the spirit of "dialogue" and "subsidiarity."

92. "The Circumscriptions are living parts of the Congregation expressing its presence in a particular geographical and cultural area. They keep united among themselves and depend on the General Government. The life of the Circumscriptions and the local diversities must be combined with the interests and unity of the whole Congregation."⁶⁰ With "decentralization", the Congregation concretely experiences subsidiarity through the sharing of tasks, functions, responsibilities, and decision-making powers in a path of growth where particular needs and interests are realized in communion with the life of the entire Rogationist religious family.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Norms*, art. 252.

⁶⁰ *Norms*, art. 126.

93. In fact, the continuous research, planning, and organization of our Rogationist life in the different Circumscriptions have contributed to the growth of a sense of belonging and the development of a vision of things beyond the circumscribed sphere of one's own Community and Circumscription. In the opinion of some, this process has created in the Confreres a greater awareness and interest in the situation of other Circumscriptions, openness to collaboration and support, and fostered the sharing of human and material resources to achieve the common goals of the Congregation.

Decentralization and inculturation

94. "Inculturation is the existential dialogue between a living people and the living Gospel."⁶¹ There can be no evangelization without inculturation because faith always encounters and fertilizes the culture, customs, and life of a people present in a territory and bearer of a tradition and historical memory.

95. Decentralization facilitates an inculturated presence in a given territory; it puts one in contact with people who possess culture and history that mark them and make them "unique." The study of issues, discernment and decisions are based on a concrete understanding of situations, contextual factors, language, and culture of the place. This facilitates the identification and adoption of appropriate solutions. Sharing this contextualized and situational awareness with the Superior General and his Council, at least when the regulations require it, greatly facilitates the path of discernment and decision-making.

96. In addition, the proximity and presence of Superiors of Circumscription in a specific territory promote more frequent meetings, consultations, and dialogues with the Confreres, fostering co-responsibility and a better sharing of the service of authority. Searching together, in a synodal spirit, before deciding, facilitates the Confrere's acceptance and carrying out with dedication the mission entrusted to him.

Decentralization: an ongoing dynamic journey

97. Decentralization, as a living dynamic process, passes through gray areas and critical points that challenge us to rethink and adapt our choices. It started with difficulties and has encountered other difficulties in recent years, especially in the sharing of human and economic resources to achieve the apostolic goals that were set.

98. Like any human process in continuous evolution, decentralization must be guided, supported, verified, and reformed to achieve the right balance between autonomy and subsidiarity. This responsibility falls to the Superior General who "has ordinary power over the entire Congregation," regularly aided by his Council.⁶²

99. After 36 years of the Congregation's experience of decentralization, many Confreres feel the need to examine whether our type of decentralization implemented is appropriate for a modern religious Congregation dedicated to evangelization and active apostolic life in today's ecclesial context.

100. Some Confreres consider the autonomy of the Circumscriptions "excessive" because they seem to disregard the scope of authority and subsidiarity provided for in our regulations. The General Government has been forced to resort to "sanatoria" to regularize and correct acts that were not duly authorized. Sometimes these interventions of the General Government are

⁶¹ Cf. KOLVENBACH H., *Living people, living gospel*. Address to the International Workshop on Native Ministry, Anishinabe, Canada, October 12, 1993.

⁶² *Constitutions*, art. 152.

seen as an "unwelcome interference," even though it is not only lawful and legitimate but also dutiful and necessary to limit serious damage to the Circumscription and perhaps even to the entire Congregation. In our General Chapter assembly, we are called to confront, discern in prayer and reflection, and seek a just remedy to this situation.

101. It is important to verify and foster the existing structures at the various levels through dialogue between the General Government and the Circumscriptions and also among the Circumscriptions themselves. Many Confreres have observed that structures function when there is the openness of the Confreres toward a common purpose, goal, and objective of the whole Congregation. When all are animated and guided by the same charismatic inspiration and tend toward the same apostolic goal, then a mutual agreement can be reached more easily, resulting in the development and implementation of common projects, especially in the areas of spiritual life, formation, and mission.

102. Centralization and decentralization are not two opposite poles but complementary ones. They involve not only the "legal and administrative" aspects, but, above all, the area of collaboration and sharing of projects in the field of mission and sharing of resources, whether human, spiritual, apostolic, or economic. Some warn against the danger of "centralized dirigisme" and call for more flexibility in the relations between the center and the periphery because giving too much weight to legislation in the relations between the Circumscriptions and the General Government could undermine the relationship of love and communion.

Interdependence of Circumscriptions and the presiding role of the General Government

103. Unity, built on communion with other Circumscriptions and the General Government, is an invaluable wealth, a precious gift of the Holy Spirit, for which we must always be grateful to the Lord and which we must continually ask for. The Superior General and his Council are considered by the Confreres as "a sign of the unity of the charism in its totality", the guide of the Congregation, and the guarantor of communion. This role is considered very positive and is valued and appreciated by the Confreres, who are convinced that unity, communion, participation, and coordination are the foundation of good governance in the Congregation.

104. An objective and disenchanting look at the present situation of our Circumscriptions that truly intend to pursue a sustainable future from a vocational, organizational, and economic point of view, makes us increasingly aware and feel the inevitable need for interdependence, mutual support, and "subsidiarity".

105. Our Circumscriptions and communities cannot afford to get entangled in their own problems and locked in a particularistic vision almost exclusively about what interests them. It would be a short-sighted vision, lacking awareness of what other communities and Circumscriptions are experiencing, without the necessary attention and concern for the whole Congregation. It is essential, that guided by the General Government, we come to acquire a higher and more universal vision and perspective, capable of embracing the whole Congregation and facilitating the realization of its common projects.

106. It was, also, suggested that some areas of Religious Life and the Apostolate, currently delegated almost totally to the Circumscriptions, be assigned to the care and responsibility of the General Government because, by their nature and importance, they are decisive for the future of the Institute: initial formation, ongoing formation, missions, and coordination of the economy.

Promoting a culture of encounter and dialogue

107. The Rogationist synodal path is characterized by a culture of encounter and dialogue and is based on respect and trust at all levels: between the General Government and the Circumscriptions, between the Circumscriptions, and between the Circumscription and its Communities. This is strengthened by constant communication and through meetings, animated by a genuine desire to get to know each other and feel a sense of each other's real situations. Only in this way can common discernment take place, coordination be initiated, and the sharing of human and material resources be achieved. True fraternal communion, which is a central element of our life as consecrated persons, grows on this path.

108. The need to improve communication in the Congregation, Circumscriptions and communities is very much felt by the Confreres because it strengthens unity, coordination, and sharing. The goal of communication, in fact, is not only to be a channel of information, but it is above all a means of formation and transformation. Communication is a fundamental component of our synodical journey.

Chapter and Assembly

109. Chapters and Circumscription Assemblies are certainly beneficial because they encourage interest, participation, and co-responsibility of everyone. Their success, however, depends to a great extent on the preparation and involvement of all the Confreres through prayer, study, discussions, and deepening.

110. The option of having a Chapter Assembly of all perpetually professed members of a Circumscription is based on criteria that correspond to the needs and expectations of the Circumscription. This formula must consider the cultural context and reality of the Circumscription, such as its internal dynamism and the age of its members.

Spiritual and cultural heritage

111. The "spiritual and cultural heritage" received as a gift from the Founder and from our tradition is our common charismatic heritage that manifests our identity and founds our fraternity. Sharing this "enduring heritage" increases the sense of belonging to the same religious family and makes the fulfillment of its mission more effective. This is an area that we must privilege and promote.

112. We all recognize the need to improve our love for the charism and the figure of the Founder. However, some communities find it difficult to promote initiatives for this purpose because of their many commitments and tasks; others enthusiastically testify to the personal and communal desire to grow in the Rogationist life and apostolate; still others have lost interest in this and in their current situations are stagnant and without significant motivation.

113. The spread in the Church and society of the knowledge about the Father Founder and our Congregation is experiencing a season of significant engagement. There has been an increase in the production, translation, and publication of Rogationist literature through the media, including the creative use of social media and online platforms. In addition, many texts of Rogationist literature have been translated into the various languages spoken in the Congregation. It is recommended to consolidate this service of translations by consolidating and expanding the team of translators.

114. In some Circumscriptions, the Rogate Sector, Rogate Vocation Centers, and Institutes of Vocational Ministry⁶³ have been actively developing materials and programs in the service of vocation ministry in the local Church and in collaboration with other Congregations, including with the recognition of Higher Institutes of Education or Universities. The Communities' various newsletters and magazines usually contain articles on the charism and the Founder intended for a wider audience outside the Congregation.

115. Although there is increased promotion of the charism and the Founder on social media and in print, they are still mostly at the popular level. There seems to be a decrease, if not a stalemate, in academic and even personal studies of the Confreres on these topics. The *Rogationist Research Center (Centro Studi Rogazionisti)*, whose service is to stimulate the exchange and deepening of ideas and reflections, research, and production of these scholarly studies, seems to have gone into hibernation. It is therefore urgent to reorganize it and make it more functional and effective.

116. In order to increase the production of new materials and to improve our understanding and interpretation of the Rogate and its meaning for contemporary times, it will be important to continue to motivate and guide our religious students to also study and deepen in their research the aspect of our charism and the figure of Father Founder.

117. Aware of the role of social media and technology in the contemporary world, we should maximize the use of these channels in promoting the charism and our apostolate. We should continue to produce vocation prayer aids, journals, reflections, blogs, videos and audio clips about the Founder, the charism, and our works and apostolate. No less important is to integrate aspects of the Founder's charism and teachings into the lessons, sermons, talks, conferences, etc. that members of the Rogate Family do in their various fields of ministry and apostolate.

118. It is recommended that the Confreres be encouraged to seek opportunities for collaboration with the local Church, the Bishops' Conference, and the Conference of Religious, especially in the areas of prayer, vocation promotion, and charity.

119. Zeal in proclaiming the *Gospel of the Rogate* should be cultivated among the Confreres from their initial formation. The choice to assign Confreres to missions in another cultural and geographical environment should be made after prudent and thoughtful discernment, and furthermore, the missionary should be adequately prepared.

Sharing of human resources

120. The primary resources of the Congregation are the Confreres whom God has called to live out the Rogationist consecration and mission. Both their quantity and quality are crucial factors for the significant and fruitful living of our fraternal communion and apostolate.

121. In some Circumscriptions there is a steady increase in the number of members; in others, serious numerical shortages are being experienced. Thus, the pooling together of our human resources could be the response not only to the pragmatic needs of personnel in Circumscriptions that lack them but also to the promptings of the Spirit to venture together into new apostolic horizons. In particular, the commitment to formation and mission are privileged fields of collaboration for common efforts among the Circumscriptions in communion with the General Government.

122. The future of the Congregation depends largely on the quality of the formation of its members. For this, it must be sustained and strengthened with adequate human, economic and

⁶³ For example: IPV (Brazil), PIVM (Philippines), FISH (Indonesia), and the Course at LUMSA (Italy).

structural resources. In the Congregation at the moment, we experience the difficulty of finding trained and capable formators and at the same time, in some Circumscriptions, there is a shortage of candidates. Therefore, we feel the need to study venues, methods, and times for the sharing of formators and formands among the various Circumscriptions. This is dictated not only by practical reasons but also because it can provide a more intercultural and unified formation. This is equally valid and urgent for ongoing formation as well. It seems that this is a way to prepare the Confreres to respond better to apostolic commitments not only in the characteristic works of our Charism but also to open ourselves to new frontiers of evangelization and charity.⁶⁴

123. The redistribution and sharing of personnel will be increasingly necessary in the coming years, especially in Circumscriptions suffering from shortages of members. This journey of communion will have a positive outcome only if it is not improvised, but well thought out, prepared, and planned, according to concrete projects and identifying the path necessary to manage this integration over time. A community formed by Religious of different origins and cultures living in "sympathetic hospitality" offers the globalized but too often divided world a "highly prophetic" sign of the Gospel value of universal fraternity⁶⁵ and the joy of working together for the mission of spreading the Kingdom of Christ.

Sharing of economic resources

124. The global economic crisis, exacerbated by pandemic crises and wars, calls us to live with a new paradigm and vision of stewardship: more open, collegial, decentralized, and at the same time connected to the broader reality of the whole Congregation. It is no longer possible to think in isolation as if economic problems involve only the community or the Circumscription that experiences them. They can be addressed only by "working together" which involves situational awareness, coordination and sharing in planning, management, ways of thinking, culture, and procedures.⁶⁶ The synodal way of life cannot but also involve the management of goods and the sharing of the gifts of the Divine Providence and the fruits of work of all, regardless of the place and the apostolate that is carried out.

125. We have been conquered by compassion and zeal for the abandoned and weary crowds of the little ones and the poor, who are like a flock without a shepherd. Like Jesus and our Founder, we are inherently called to sharing. That is why it is necessary to initiate a change of mentality that allows us to live in a more humane way, with a typically Rogationist lifestyle that is permeated by the Gospel logic of accepting everything as a gift in order to become a gift for our brothers and sisters: *Freely you have received, freely give* (Mt 10:8). Our evangelical vow of poverty is to be lived both personally and collectively, characterized by generous solidarity and sharing, responsibility, industriousness, and trust in the Divine Providence.

126. Some fear that greater "economic centralization" could lead to a kind of religious colonialism and forms of dependency. Others observe that the best results do not come from the best practices and most efficient organization. Good results come if, in addition to competence, seriousness, and professionalism, we know how to cultivate the spiritual and human values of fraternal relationships, such as openness to the culture of the other, a spirit of humility, a willingness to learn, and an inner disposition to detachment from possessions. This fosters better management and distribution of economic resources. Likewise, we achieve better results if we know how to cultivate a deeply vocational formation, understood and lived as a

⁶⁴ Cf. *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, no. 16.

⁶⁵ Cf. *New wine new wineskins*, nos. 33, 40.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, nos. 32-33.

renunciation of personal interests and a ready and generous response to the divine call with a responsible commitment to apostolic and missionary work.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, nos. 14-16

PART FOUR

THE PATH OF COORDINATION

127. Pope Francis and the present process of the Synod on Synodality have underlined in both conceptual and practical terms that synodality is a "constitutive element of the Church,"⁶⁸ an ancient but ever-new theme in the Church. The deepening of our 13th General Chapter on the themes of unity, coordination, and sharing clearly manifests that synodality finds its full meaning and manifestation in living our Rogationist religious life today.

128. The "walking together" in our religious life must be founded first of all on our relationship as brothers in Christ. It is expressed also in the structures and functions that generate co-responsibility, understood as availability to service, listening, and dialogue, with dynamics processes that seek a growing integration, capable of being translated into personal and community life projects, as well as programs of the Circumscription and the entire Congregation, that renders our consecrated vocation visible.

129. Synodality is an essential dimension of the life of the Church, simple in its understanding but complex in its operation because ideals are not always easily achieved in the structures and organisms that guide our daily life. The path of coordination offers practical guidelines and operational choices for a better realization of synodality, unity, and sharing in our Congregation, elements that are so necessary today as we live out our charism and carry out our mission in new and ever-changing contexts.

Local community

130. The service of authority plays a key role in the life of our communities, first of all in animating the religious life of each Confrere and also in efficiently organizing apostolic services, making each member of the community a protagonist in the common path of consecration and mission. To make this service more effective, it is recommended to:

- a. Plan strategies and itineraries for leadership succession, particularly with regard to the selection and preparation of leaders.
- b. Introduce first-time superiors and council members to their responsibilities through specific formation including group workshops.
- c. Promote meetings and regular updates of all superiors and their respective councils. These are concrete means for the Circumscription to accompany them and coordinate with each other.
- d. Prepare a manual or practical guide for the local superior and his council to guide them in carrying out their responsibilities.
- e. Make together an annual personal and community life project that outlines goals, means, and times to foster growth in religious life, as suggested in the document *Stir into flame the gift of God that is in you (2 Tim 1:6). Project of Rogationist permanent formation (2002)*. Let this common project, read in the light of the orientations of the Chapters and Assemblies, be a guide and also a means of verification.
- f. Verify that moments of encounter, especially council and family meetings, are held regularly and minutes are taken.

⁶⁸ FRANCIS, *Address on the occasion of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican City October 17, 2015.

Circumscription

131. The service of the authority of the Superior and Council of Circumscription is responsible for fostering a sense of belonging and guiding the synodical journey, in unity and sharing, of every member and community of the Circumscription.

- a. What was said above about superiors and local councils, namely: leadership succession, introductory training, updating and accompaniment training, and practical guides or manuals, are also applicable to the Superior of the Circumscription and his council.
- b. The primary role of the Councilors is to work together with the Superior of Circumscription in his ministry.⁶⁹ At the same time, Councilors are also assigned to animating and coordinating particular areas of service under the guidance of the Superior of Circumscription.
- c. Visitation according to the regulations⁷⁰ is an effective means offered to the Superior of Circumscription to meet with the Confreres and communities, to learn about their situation and concerns, to offer guidance and encouragement, and to suggest solutions to problems. But first and foremost, it is a fraternal visitation, although following canonical requirements. Its effectiveness will depend on the necessary preparation and verification of the community's implementation of the suggestions and indications given.
- d. Apart from the canonical visitation, the Superior of Circumscription shall promote encounters, in person or through other means, with communities or Confreres who are in particular situations or live in locations far away from the Circumscription.

General Government and Circumscriptions

132. All Circumscriptions, under the guidance of the Superior General, should engage in a constant synodical journey in order to grow in harmony with each other. Within one's scope of authority in the spirit of subsidiarity, each component participates in the process of discussion and discernment to be able to decide and implement common projects. This synodical spirit, without neglecting the legitimate expectations of each individual Circumscription, aims at bringing together the energies and resources of all. The orchestrated and coordinated efforts of each can lead Circumscriptions to achieve their goals more efficiently and expeditiously. The coordination of the General Government with the Circumscriptions and among the Circumscriptions themselves may be enhanced by means of the following:

- a. The annual Conference of the General Council with the Superiors of Circumscriptions, in person, or when not possible, at least online. Additional meetings can be arranged if necessary. These encounters have been proven to be a very rich venue for knowing the situations and concerns of each Circumscription, expressing readiness for mutual support, planning, coordinating, implementing, and verifying together the projects in consideration.
- b. The Conference of the General Council with the Superiors of Circumscriptions and their Councils to present the six-year action plan based on the directions of the General Chapter. In doing so, the directions of the General Chapter can cascade into the action plans of the Circumscriptions and the life of the communities.
- c. Evaluate how to further improve the performance of the Secretariats by sectors, each composed of the General Councilor and Circumscription Councilors of the sector.
- d. A training workshop for the Superior of Circumscription and his Council, as well as the Treasurer and the Secretary, at the beginning of their term to introduce them to their respective

⁶⁹ Cf. *Norms*, art. 229.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 165.

roles and scope of authority. This includes dialogue on practical guidelines between the Superior General and the Councilors, the Treasurer, and the Secretary. The *Practical Guide for Superiors of Circumscriptions*, which is constantly updated, is a very useful tool for procedures and particular situations.

- e. Reconsideration of the term of the government of the Circumscription (for example, 3 years or 6 years) to be in synchrony with the term of the General Government.

Chapter and Assembly

133. Chapters and Assemblies are singular moments in the synodal journey of the Congregation. These are occasions to review the path taken in living the Rogationist religious life in the concrete contexts, and also to indicate new directions of the journey to be taken according to the signs of the times. These meetings are both a point of arrival and a point of departure for the Congregation's journey. They go beyond their celebration and their contributions are followed up in the concrete steps taken by Circumscriptions and communities. We can further improve the quality of the celebration of Chapters and Assemblies to better meet our needs through the following:

- a. The discussions, deliberations, and decisions during the General Chapter, Provincial Chapter, and the Assembly of Quasi Province and Delegations are translated into concrete action plans. The Program of Government for the period of its term becomes the direction and the point of verification of the journey.
- b. At the beginning of its mandate, the General Government collects three main priorities that each Circumscription proposes. Besides the indications of the General Chapter, the General Government will take into consideration these priorities and try to incorporate them into its strategic plan for the six-year term.
- c. To foster the cascading of the General Chapter's orientations, the Chapter and Assembly of Circumscription shall take into consideration the General Chapter Document and the General Government's Six-Year Program to inculturate them in their contexts, thus fostering synergy and avoiding parallel paths.
- d. The Government of Circumscription, at the beginning of its term, prepares its four-year plan for submission to the General Government.
- e. It is necessary to set appropriate normative guidelines for the celebration of General Assemblies of Circumscriptions.

Effective use of documents

134. The documents issued by the relevant bodies and authorities, such as the Document of Chapter and Assembly, the Program of Government, Circular Letters, Guidelines and Instructions, Reports of Visitations, etc., are translations in summary form of the efforts of reflection, discussion and discernment undertaken on vital issues of Rogationist religious life. They are not intended to be mono-directional, but to elicit an operative response from the recipients. Therefore, it is suggested that communities introduce an effective feedback system that includes document reception, reflection/discussion, action plan, implementation, and verification.

Reconfiguration of Circumscriptions

135. The Congregation, as a living body, has experienced various changes and transformations in the course of its history. The decentralization introduced 36 years ago has undergone various reconfigurations and this is expected to continue. These processes require careful accompaniment

by the General Government and the involvement of the Circumscriptions. It would be useful to provide guidelines and norms regarding the steps, procedures, and methods to be followed in establishing new Circumscriptions or merging existing ones.

Networking

136. Networking is an effective sign of synodality and synergy, especially in interacting with people in the same field of service, sharing information and experiences for a common vision-mission, planning, sharing of resources, formation, and implementation of common projects. This way of working is already implemented by some Circumscriptions, especially in the socio-educational apostolate and vocation ministry, including working in partnership with other organizations that share the same service.⁷¹ Expanding networking at the level of the entire Congregation should be promoted.⁷²

Organisms

137. Various bodies have been established to render better services to the whole Congregation. It is necessary to study and propose a plan of action to improve their organization and foster more effective functioning. These observations and requests have been recurrent in previous General Chapters. The following organisms are mentioned in particular:

- a. *The Sector Secretariat* or Commission, chaired by the relevant authority, is an effective organ for generating ideas, planning, coordination, and verification. Some sectors may also overlap among Secretariats, so it would be appropriate to promote joint initiatives among them. At the general level, it is headed by the General Councilor, and the members consist of his counterparts Circumscription Councilors for the sector. At the Circumscription level, it is composed of the Councilor of the sector, as chairman, and other Confreres working in that sector.
- b. The *Rogationist Study Center (Centro Studi Rogazionisti)* has a key role in promoting inculturation; stimulating and encouraging in-depth studies on the charism and other Rogationist themes; organizing forums, workshops, or Study Conferences; and publishing research papers, especially enhancing the journal *Studi Rogazionisti*. There is a need to revive this Center with the collaboration of all the Circumscriptions to better and further spread the knowledge of the life, teachings, charism, and spirituality of St. Hannibal.
- c. The *Commission on Translations* has substantially contributed to making Rogationist literature accessible in other languages for the benefit of Confreres and formands. Let its service be further improved through the establishment of subgroups of translators and editors in coordination with the Circumscriptions. This may speed up the work and ensure the quality of translations.
- d. In addition, it was proposed to establish a *virtual library* for easy access to Rogationist literature and related materials in different languages, so essential for the initial and ongoing formation and also for research. Finally, initiatives should be organized to encourage the Confreres to read and study our literature, such as providing them with an "official" presentation or an accompanying reading guide.
- e. It might be useful to establish a *Rogationist Media Center* at the central level to serve as a clearinghouse of news, information, and other materials from the various Circumscriptions and

⁷¹ For example: a unified branding and management system of Rogationist Schools; inter-congregational collaboration in Institutes of Vocational Ministry; membership in ecclesial bodies.

⁷² For example: Network of Rogate Vocational Centers, Vocational Pastoral Institutes, Socio-educational Institutes, Formators and Formation Houses of the different Circumscriptions.

their organisms. In addition, an action plan should be prepared on how to improve our current websites and social media platforms, to help establish new ones, link them effectively with each other, and properly prepare personnel for this service.

- f. The charism of the Rogate continues to attract and inspire both laity and clergy to commit themselves to pray and work for vocations. The Daughters of Divine Zeal, in the first place, and then the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV), the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (USPV), Missionaries of the Rogate, associated lay groups under the Union of Rogationist Associations (UAR), and non-associated laity are our partners for the same cause.

138. The commitment to revitalize the UPV and USPV begun several years ago should be further strengthened with the search for and promotion of paths of encounter, dialogue, and collaboration among the different components of the Family of the Rogate. As outlined in their respective statutes, this includes the internal organizational structure at the national or local level, the formation program of members, their growth in their commitment to the charism, their involvement in the mission of the Congregation, and their links with the other components of the same charismatic family.

139. The Councilors of the sector of the Rogate and the sector of the Laity and their respective Secretariats play a vital role in animating and coordinating with the ecclesiastical assistants, leaders, and respective governing bodies of these associations. It is worth exploring at the Circumscription level, where it does not yet exist, the possibility of creating an umbrella organization, similar to the UAR, to foster mutual support and edification among lay Rogationists. The same goes for collaboration with the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Missionaries of the Rogate.

140. The planned International Lay Symposium, although not carried out due to the Covid-19 pandemic, prompted the Circumscriptions to carry out local symposia and congresses that became an opportunity for renewed commitment and verification of a better organization of the various groups. These initiatives should be followed up and further enhanced.

Formation

141. Rogationist formation, both initial and ongoing, is a fruitful area of unity, coordination, and sharing. Formation in different cultural and geographical contexts has made evident the richness of inculturation. We welcome and value this diversity while striving to maintain unity in formation, as the *Ratio Institutionis* envisions.

142. As already indicated in the 12th General Chapter, it is necessary to continue the revision of the *Ratio Institutionis* (1996). In addition to making it up-to-date with the recent orientations of the Church and the Congregation, the *Ratio* should also provide the common framework of reference regarding the principles, objectives, and contents in the various stages of formation that are inculturated in the Directory/Manual of Formation of Circumscriptions. In addition, it was suggested that both initial and ongoing formation be incorporated into a single *Ratio*, thus emphasizing that formation is a lifelong journey.

143. In addition, it was proposed to study the structural and institutional dimensions of the ongoing formation and the sabbatical period⁷³ and develop a program, even at the inter-circumscription level. Ongoing formation is already present in the current *Ratio* and is the main theme of the *Project of Rogationist Ongoing Formation* (2002). However, the need is widely felt in the Congregation to develop a concrete itinerary, with content, personnel, and structures, in collaboration and coordination among the Circumscriptions to better meet the formation needs of the Confreres.

⁷³ Cf. *New wine new wineskins*, n. 35e.

144. There was a suggestion to study and plan the organization of initial and ongoing formation, and the preparation of a team of experts from among the Confreres who can conduct well-organized and appealing spiritual exercises or courses for the Rogate Family in the various Circumscriptions, both in-person and online. This team is coordinated at the level of Circumscriptions and the General Government.

145. Similarly, it was suggested to study the possibility of setting up a Rogationist Distance Learning School that would organize systematic online training programs for Confreres and our collaborators in the different areas, or courses on Rogationist religious life for those in ongoing formation as well as for those in the different stages of initial formation.⁷⁴ These online inter-circumscription formation programs will enhance mutual familiarity among our Confreres, cultural exchange, and sharing of the inculturation of charism, spirituality, and mission.

146. To further strengthen the formation in the charism, in addition to the program offered in initial formation, it was suggested to study the possibility of organizing an intensive period of charismatic formation for candidates for the priesthood before their ordination or in the early years of their ministry, or, in the case of Coadjutors Brothers, before their perpetual profession. Similar to the formation of formators, this program can be organized by the General Government and welcome participants from different Circumscriptions. In a mixed format of online and face-to-face meetings, the program could conclude with a pilgrimage to Messina enriched by times of study and a spiritual retreat.

147. In view of the crucial importance of both initial and ongoing formation, the investment made so far in the formation of formators should be continued.

Human Resources

148. There is a need for a system of coordination for the exchange of Confreres, which must be carried out by the General Government, keeping in mind the Congregation's formative and apostolic project.

149. The experience of the exchanges of Confreres between Circumscriptions and the collaboration on common apostolic projects is constantly growing. The *Guidelines for the Exchange of Religious Personnel between Rogationist Circumscriptions*⁷⁵ reiterate that these exchanges must be the result of common discernment, reflection, study, discussion, and planning. It includes the identification and proper preparation of suitable personnel and related economic aspects. The path implies coordination between the Superior General and the Circumscriptions, especially in instances arising from the Conference of Superiors of Circumscription.

150. The establishment in Rome of the Rogationist International Student Residence, configured as a center for the formation of Rogationist religious students from various Circumscriptions with a view to their insertion in the communities and apostolate of the Italian Provinces, is an endeavor to be valued in order to better prepare for the sharing of human resources. Establishing an intercultural formation community of formators and formands of different nationalities, even from the initial stage of formation, enhances both intercultural competence and insertion in European socio-cultural and ecclesial contexts where they will be engaged in the future. If deemed appropriate, it is worth studying the possibility of replicating this experience in other Circumscriptions.

⁷⁴ Initially provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the various online activities undertaken by Circumscriptions, such as courses, workshops, webinars, meetings, and prayer sessions, can continue to be an efficient avenue for initial and ongoing formation. Examples: council meetings, meetings for specific areas of service and tasks, courses for formands (postulants, novices, and young religious), etc.

⁷⁵ RAMPAZZO B., *Circular Letter* No. 220/2020, October 24, 2020.

Material resources

151. The ordinary way of sharing economic resources in the Congregation is by means of percentage, according to the economic condition and needs of a house or Circumscription. Every community and Circumscription should strive to contribute even if it is just the "widow's mite," because it is a concrete way of expressing the sense of belonging to the Congregation.

152. There are other means of sharing economic resources, such as the Mission Office at the Central and Circumscriptional levels, our various Non-Governmental Organizations, the Anthonian Benefactors Office, the Rogationist Mission Day, and bidding for funds, which have supported our socio-educational and charitable institutes, distance and missionary adoptions, apostolate, and projects. In addition, communities have responded quickly and generously to occasional appeals for solidarity in times of humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

153. It is hoped that other modes of economic sustainability will be initiated, coordinated, and networked through the creation of the Development Office for Projects to participate in public and private bidding for funds.⁷⁶

154. For some years now, the Church has been urging Institutes of Consecrated Life to define their "stable patrimony" according to the criteria set forth in the document of CICLSAL, *The economy at the service of charism and mission*, nos. 38-40. The 12th General Chapter in its Chapter Document *Seeing the crowds*, with the Operational Proposal no. 112, had already asked the Congregation to define its "Stable Patrimony". The present Chapter Assembly would be an opportune occasion to take up the subject again and to establish the competencies and modalities to be followed in order to implement what the Church is insistently asking of religious Institutes.⁷⁷

Toward a common project

155. Working together for a "common project" concretely expresses our synodality because it offers an opportunity to deepen fraternal dialogue and frank and fruitful encounters among Circumscriptions that could lead to concrete orientations and enable a better distribution of resources in order to faithfully live out our "charism" centered on prayer to the Lord of the harvest and charity toward the little ones and the poor.

156. Our regulations entrust to the General Government the task of opening or closing houses or works, in coordination and dialogue with the Circumscriptions to which they belong. This decision is the result of reflection, careful study, discussion, and planning based on objective criteria: pastoral, charismatic, missionary, socio-economic, etc. Considering these situations from a larger vision of a *common project* that involves other Circumscriptions, the following has been suggested:

- a. When particular situations arise in which a Circumscription is unable to continue to keep a House open due to lack of personnel, before deciding to close it and put it up for sale, rent it out or give the property to other entities for free use, the idea of entrusting the management of that House to another Rogationist Circumscription should be considered. The Superior General

⁷⁶ Cf. *Seeing the crowds*, no. 109.

⁷⁷ *The stable patrimony consists of all the immovable and movable property that by means of a specific assignment are destined to guarantee the economic security of the institute. For the goods of the entire institute, the General Chapter or the Superior General with the consent of his/her Council makes this assignment. For the assets of a province, as well as for the assets of a legitimately established house, the Provincial Chapter or other similar assemblies (cf. can. 632) or the Provincial Superior with the consent of his/her Council and confirmed by the Superior General makes this assignment.* CICLSAL, *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, no. 38.

coordinates this entrustment with the Superiors of Circumscription both in the discernment process and in the implementation phase.⁷⁸

- b. With regard to new openings of missionary presences and stations in new territories, whether at the initiative of the General Government or at the proposal of a Circumscription, their establishment and direction must be placed directly under the authority of the Superior General. Circumscriptions are always involved in the study and planning of the project through the identification of religious personnel and the provision of economic resources, but it is up to the Superior General to make the decision and define the timing of the opening of this new reality and to which Circumscription the new community belongs. This will avoid misunderstandings and disagreements regarding territory and jurisdiction.
- c. For the purpose of spreading the charism or pastoral care, the Superior General may authorize a Circumscription to initiate a presence (missionary station or community) in a geographical area where another Circumscription is present, after consulting and coordinating with the Superiors of the Circumscriptions concerned and evaluating the appropriateness of the presence.⁷⁹
- d. As for the Confreres to be assigned in new openings, they should have the suitability and receive remote and immediate preparation. In order to safeguard the community life, the number of religious personnel for the new opening should be guaranteed, preventing the Confreres from living alone for too long a period.

⁷⁸ Cf. RAMPAZZO B., *Guidelines for the exchange of religious personnel between Rogationist circumscriptions*. Circular Letter, nn.17-18.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* n. 20.

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