

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS
for the XIII General Chapter

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

PRESENTATION

1. The theme of the 13th General Chapter of the Congregation, “*Rogationist Religious Life Today – Unity, Coordination, 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” that solemnly opened on October 9-10, 2021, in Rome and then on October 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 the theme

2. The choice of the theme of the General Chapter was itself a fruit of a synodal journey. In a letter dated July 26, 2019, the Father General consulted the Circumscriptions regarding the theme. It was one of the items discussed during the Conference of the Superiors and Councils of Circumscriptions held in Messina (October 14-19, 2019) as well as in the Conference of Superiors of Circumscriptions convoked a few months later (February 17-21, 2020). The topics that emerged from the consultations were predominantly: “journeying together”, “unity”, “coordination”, and “sharing”. Thus, in the setting of discernment of the General Council, in the letter dated February 25, 2020, the Father General defined the theme of the 13th General Chapter.

3. The chosen theme touches on the actuality of the changing world, society, and Church that have impacts on the significance of the Rogationist religious life that involves subjects, structures, processes, and methodologies. Just like the journey of the Church of Jerusalem to the rest of the world up to the present, the journey of the small caravan of our Congregation from the time of St. Hannibal up to now, from Messina to Apulia and beyond Italy, is characterized by the never-changing mission of announcing the Gospel of the Rogate in ever-changing and diverse contexts where we are inserted. Today, our Congregation can also call itself an *international Institute*, which “*bears witness to the sense of communion among peoples, races, and cultures.*”¹

A synodal path

4. In step with the universal Church, our Congregation in its continuing historical journey is also searching for “a common path” capable of combining unity and plurality, communion and diversity, and a single charism within the enriching multiplicity of cultural expressions. The experience of 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 to the voice of our brothers and sisters, especially those who have no voice, we are invited “to promote a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility, where we have the possibility

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, Vatican 1996, no. 51.

of gathering together a diversity of gifts in view of the mission of the Church”² and our Congregation. This involves a renewed deepening and enrichment of our fidelity and unity in the Rogationist charism and mission resulting in a sense of belonging in the same religious family, fraternal relationship, and a shared and common project. The governance structure and coordination are, without a doubt, particularly concrete dimensions of such processes.

Drafting of the document

5. The drafting of the *Instrumentum Laboris* followed the synodal path of listening to and involving the confreres, communities, and Circumscriptions. After determining the theme of the General Chapter, on February 25, 2020, the Superior General constituted a Commission for the *Lineamenta*. Due to the limitations brought about by the pandemic, it was decided to constitute a Commission of a reduced number of members who accomplished their commitment entirely online. The Commission decided to send a survey form to all the Circumscriptions to solicit ideas, suggestions, and proposals on the theme. The abundant responses that arrived from the communities and individuals formed the basis for the elaboration of the text of the *Lineamenta*. The Commission decided to integrate all the points into the document, the final draft of which was submitted to the General Council on October 15, 2021. Subsequently, after the results of the election of delegates to the General Chapter came out, on October 19, 2021, the Superior General constituted the Pre-Capitular Commission composed of eight capitular members, with every Circumscription represented. Its task was to draw up the document *Instrumentum Laboris*, gathering and synthesizing the contributions of communities and Confreres to the *Lineamenta*. Due to the prevailing restrictions of the pandemic, the Commission worked mainly online, except for an in-person meeting of the majority of the members held in Rome on January 17-18, 2021. Noting that the contents of *Lineamenta* were so extensive, the Pre-Capitular Commission decided to select those that are directly pertinent to the theme of the Chapter.

Text structure

6. To make the flow of the *Instrumentum Laboris* more flowing and didactic, the Commission has rearranged the order of the theme and structured the document in the following four parts: *Part 1. Rogationist religious life today*, which gives a description of our communities and mission; *Part 2. The path to unity*, which describes the foundational sources of our common identity; *Part 3. The path of sharing* presents concrete modes of belongingness to the same charismatic family; and *Part 4. The path of coordination* traces the practical ways of regulating sharing and constructing unity.

Transmission

7. 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 for eventual observations and integration to be sent to the Commission before the start of the Chapter. Moreover, the text is also uploaded on our website to allow the participation of all. 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.

² SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Vademecum*, Vatican 2021, no. 1.3.

PART ONE

THE ROGATIONIST RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY

The journey of the small caravan

8. Alluding to the biblical image of the journey of faith of the People of God, St. Hannibal described the beginning of the Pious Work as a “small caravan” of its first components who set out in a “pilgrimage”, which although “arduous”, was accompanied and “comforted” by the Bread from Heaven.³ The charism of the Rogate, entrusted by the Holy Spirit to the Founder for the building up of the entire Church, sown in the fertile grounds of the poverty in the Avignone Quarter, grew and branched out from Sicily to Apulia and beyond Italy.

Announcing the Rogate in changing contexts

9. As we commemorate the 125th anniversary of our foundation, we witness the living history of the Rogationist Congregation in the fulfillment of the mission of announcing the *Gospel of the Rogate* to all the world with its new existential frontiers, whether as a first announcement (*kerygma*) in the *missio ad gentes* or as collaboration with local Churches in the mission of new evangelization.

10. The missionary spirit paved the way for the banner of the Rogate to reach other Avignone Quarters in the world and respond to their actual spiritual and material needs. Thanks to the gradual yet consistent overall numerical growth in the Congregation, despite the stasis and decline in some Circumscriptions, the “small plant” of the Congregation is consolidating and acquiring a multicultural feature. Moreover, inspired by the evangelical logic of giving freely what has been freely received, Rogationists of different cultural backgrounds, respond with zeal and availability to sow the charism in other fields even beyond their country of origin.

11. Today, we are present in both places where Christians are the majority and where they are the minority, in vibrant Christian communities as well as in those that experience crisis of faith, in places where Christianity has deep roots and where Christianity is still unknown. We are inserted in different socio-economic milieus, with the various needs and problems relative to them.

12. The reception of the Rogationists in these geographical areas and cultural contexts is a clear manifestation of the relevance of our charism. Inserted into the local Church and society, our charism, spirituality, and mission have acquired a contextualized cultural dimension with new understanding, expressions, and visibility. At the same time, our charism has enriched the life of the local Church and society.⁴ In different Circumscriptions, there have been notable contributions in favor of vocation ministry, rooted in prayer, and social-educational apostolate in various bodies such as the Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious, and diocesan offices. Moreover, our communities creatively engage in society in the area of human promotion, especially in favor of the marginalized.

13. Our actual contexts and times obviously differ significantly from that of St. Hannibal and our origins. Nonetheless, the values and relevance of the Rogate remain perennial: the compassion of the Heart of Jesus in front of the tired and exhausted flock and the abundant harvest, and the remedy that the Lord has commanded: the prayer for the evangelical laborers and the commitment to the work of shepherding and gathering the harvest.

³ Cf. DI FRANCIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 398.

⁴ Cf. “*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, no. 57.

Decentralization of the Congregation

14. The growth and development of the Institute through new foundations have favored the process of decentralization which 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.

15. The Institute's division into parts (provinces, quasi-provinces, delegations) has favored inculturation, streamlined the organizational and bureaucratic aspect, favored encounters between circumscription superiors and the confreres, facilitated and encouraged insertion in the local churches, stimulated responsibility and apostolic creativity, elicited vocational and economic autonomy, facilitated the spread of the charism, and encouraged deepening in the knowledge of the writings of the Founder and of Rogationist literature, through the translation of materials in various languages. On the other hand, decentralization if not properly governed, can result in division and the exaltation of partisan interests to the detriment of the good of the entire Institute. It can weaken unity, and hinder communication and the sense of belonging to the Congregation, forgetting that "the whole is greater than the part."⁵

16. More than structural, decentralization is relational. More than organizational efficiency, it is the openness to the creative movements of the Holy Spirit who inspires to incarnate the same charism in the different historical and cultural milieus.

The fecundity and challenges of inculturation

17. The 12th General Chapter highlighted the dynamic process of inculturation of the charism in the logic of the Incarnation.⁶ The culture and milieu are fertile soils for the charism to be expressed in unedited and unique ways, which are fruits of the continuing efforts of common discernment in reading the signs of times and responding to them accordingly in the light of our Rogationist identity. There is a tension between, on the one hand, the courage to look at the present and the future with openness to the breath of the Spirit and creativity and, on the other hand, holding back to the nostalgia and fixation of the past, with attachments to structures both in the material sense and in thought. The fundamental question is always in front of us: how open or resistant are we to the motions and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to encounter, dialogue, and collaboration with cultures, society, and the Church? How audacious and creative are we as Rogationist communities in shifting our paradigms to be relevant to the here and now?

18. The process of inculturation has been noted in all Circumscriptions. While some communities are advancing in this effort, others are still in the initial phase. There remain inevitable challenges related to cultural diversity and the many emerging difficulties faced by society and the Church. We recognize that we still need to constantly understand inculturation and appreciate the dynamic process of the charism in order to reveal its richness, importance, and authentic value. At times, Circumscriptions are unable to cope with the rapid and radical changes in the Church and in society, which call into question the meaning of the charism in our times. Moreover, we have difficulty in adequately expressing our charism according to the language and sensibilities of our current contexts.

19. There should be careful attention to ensure that cultural expressions and the mold assumed in one culture and historical context not be uncritically transported and simply reproduced in another context. The process of inculturation is broader and more complex than mere repetition and duplication. Therefore, it is necessary to accompany the Confreres in this process of understanding and inculturating the charism not only during the initial formation but more importantly in the ongoing formation.

⁵ FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, Vatican 2013, no. 237.

⁶ Cf. *Seeing the crowds*, nos. 55-57.

The Rogationist prophetic mission

20. Through the contemplation of the compassion of the Christ of the Rogate and obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we can live our Rogationist prophetic mission intensely and fully, that is, as men of prayer and charity, everywhere, in the footsteps of St. Hannibal. We live it first of all with the witness of our religious consecration to the incarnate presence of God, the values of the Kingdom, and the transcendental vocation of man, manifested concretely in fraternal life, lived not out of compulsion, but in the spirit of communion and sharing in the following of Christ. Faced with the challenges of our society, we read the signs of the times and respond as good laborers in any field, as long as we strive to make our community a school of prayer and at the same time a house of charity for all, especially for those in the periphery.

21. Without diminishing the recognition of the values and triumphs of the human family, we cannot also deny that our current world is deeply wounded, signed by worldliness, secularization, and the eclipse of God; by selfishness and closure; by injustice, unequal opportunities, exploitation, and poverty; by loneliness, indifference, exclusion, division, discrimination, conflicts, violence, and wars.

22. The conditions in some Circumscriptions such as the shortage of new vocations, the imbalance between the increasing demands of the apostolate and the diminished numbers of members, the advancement in age, the restrictive state regulations, and other seemingly insurmountable challenges posed to us by the mutations in the society and the Church can lead us to the complacency of doing the minimum or to discouragement, thus resorting to what Pope Francis called the hidden idols of spiritual worldliness, numbers, and functionalism.⁷ However, read in the light of the pericope of the Rogate, these conditions serve as stimuli for us to discern and courageously opt to be prophetic signs of hope in the world today, even if this would entail changes in structures and priorities. The concrete witnessing of the Rogationist religious consecration, fraternal life, and service to others become ever more prophetic and convincing today.

Apostles of the Rogate

23. Recent General Chapters⁸ delved deeply and extensively into our identity rooted in the charism of the Rogate which the Holy Spirit gave to St. Hannibal for the building up of the Church and transmitted through us in history. They have reiterated the strict connection between the charism and our living of the evangelical counsels, fraternity, and mission. The Rogate is the source of communion in community because it gathers us into one body to implore in the Name of the Lord for good laborers in the harvest as he himself commanded. Entering into the Heart of Jesus through this Rogation leads to the understanding and zeal of the Rogate that move us to spread this prayer in various inculturated and creative ways. Our *rogation*, to be authentic, cannot remain indifferent to the interests of the Lord but spurns us to the availability to respond, “Here I am, Lord, send me.”

24. The Church recognizes us as Apostles of the Rogate and expects us to radiate that aspect of the life and mission of the Christ of the Rogate in our contemporary world. We should continue and consolidate our specific apostolate of the prayer for vocations in collaboration with the local Church, ecclesial bodies, and Conferences of Religious. In this service, the Rogate Vocation Centers remain ever valid in the production of materials for prayer, stimulating discussions and reflections by means of print and digital media, animating conferences and forums, and collaboration with the preparation and celebration of the World Day Prayer for Vocations, national or diocesan vocation month or week, and similar initiatives. In some instances, the Rogate Vocation Center works side by side with

⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, *Homily at the Chrism Mass*, Holy Thursday, Vatican, April 14, 2022.

⁸ *Apostles of the Rogate. The mission of the Rogationists at the start 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.

the Institute of Vocation Ministry which brings the discourse of the Apostolate of the Rogate and the centrality of prayer in the realms of culture, academe, and formation and training 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 the field is warmly received and appreciated. It is a contribution that we Rogationist can offer at the frontline.

25. Centers of Spirituality, Houses of Prayer, and communities dedicated to contemplative prayer are other environments that are closely linked to the Apostolate of the Rogate because they offer the place and initiatives for prayer, vocation discernment, and deepening of the vocation ministry founded on prayer, as well as the ongoing formation of the Family of the Rogate. In Circumscriptions where this type of apostolate exists, it should be fostered and sustained. If it is not yet in place, it is worth discerning the possibility of introducing it in the Circumscription if the conditions are ripe.

26. The vision and zeal of St. Hannibal who actively involved the clergy and the laity in the crusade of prayer in obedience to the command of the Rogate and its diffusion indicate another aspect of the Apostolate of the Rogate. The re-launch of the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV) and the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocation (PUPV)⁹ should be coupled with the raising of awareness among the Rogationists of the historical and actual relevance of these associations. Some Circumscriptions are introducing them in their contexts, some others are reviving them. Along the continuing journey of the Congregation, other associations inspired by the Rogate have arisen among the laity and the clergy. As we continue to be inserted in new geographical and cultural areas, new forms of adherence to the charism can be expected.

27. The responses of Confreres to the questionnaire revealed the wide acceptance that the Apostolate of the Rogate takes the priority among our works and commitments but it does not seem to be concretely reflected in the actual state of affairs, especially in terms of the disproportion of the number of personnel dedicated to it compared to the other areas of apostolate. In as much as this field also requires specific training and preparation, the problem of sufficient and qualified personnel is magnified. There are efforts to integrate the Apostolate of the Rogate into the program of formation, especially in the Religious Student Residence (Studentato), in terms of involvement and exposure. However, it has also been acknowledged that much more has to be done in order that the Confreres naturally identify this as the “specific apostolate” of the Rogationists, give it the due priority, and make themselves available to zealously commit to this ministry.

Laborers in the harvest

28. The obedience to the command of the prayer for gospel laborers and its spread are intrinsically connected to being laborers of the harvest. The works of charity and mercy for the benefit of the neighbor are the “legitimate and immediate consequence” of our fourth vow.¹⁰

29. Our living history attests to our commitment both as men of prayer and as men of charity, in accordance with the two imperatives of our Lord: “Rogate” (Lk. 10:2) and “Ite” (Lk. 10:3). We have been engaged as “laborers in the great harvest of the Lord” and “shepherds to the tired and exhausted flock” in many forms according to the signs of the times and the concrete needs of the territory.

30. We keep the apostolic commitment to the integral promotion of every person, with the preferential love for the poor and the little ones whom our Founder considers as the tender harvest,

⁹ Cf. MEZZARI A. and SALEMI T., joint circular letter on the updated By-laws of the UPV and PUPV, in *Bollettino* 93, no. 4 (2014) pp. 292-300.

¹⁰ Cf. DI FRANCIA, A., *Preziose adesioni* [1901], p. 6; *Scritti*, typescript, vol. 61 [02176].

expressed in the traditional historical forms of orphanages, trade training schools, instruction, education, and evangelization.

31. In addition, new forms of apostolate have emerged in response to the changing social contexts, such as the “casa famiglia” and centers of social assistance; the welcoming of refugees, foreign migrants, street children, and the homeless; the soup kitchens, clinics, provision of clothing, hygiene, and lodging; the distant adoption, scholarships, livelihood programs, and housing projects; the insertion of the religious community in impoverished districts and the empowerment of the poor who live there; the care and defense of the indigenous peoples.

32. Moreover, there has been a constant increase in our involvement in the pastoral care of souls in parishes and sanctuaries, fertile grounds for us to express our particular Rogationist characteristics in the evangelization of the laity and sharing with them our charism, spirituality, and mission.¹¹

33. We have also witnessed the many mission send-offs of Confreres leaving their land of origin and going to the missions both in the poor and remote countryside as well as in big urban centers, in non-Christian and Christian communities alike.

New wine in new wineskins¹²

34. The conditions of society and the Church will continue to change, and new demands will emerge. This requires us a constant discernment and openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit because it is he who determines our path and not the state of affairs we find ourselves in.

35. The compassion of the Christ of the Rogate toward the great harvest and the helpless flock remains perennial. It is our prism to see new approaches and visions of our apostolate and mission. Many Confreres in their responses to the questionnaire have underlined the temptation to get stuck in the nostalgia of a glorious past, the complacency in doing the minimum required, the nestling in comfort zones, the relationship based on management standards rather than fraternal communion, and the imprisonment in paradigms of thoughts and practices. However, there is also an earnest desire to rekindle the zeal to be laborers in the Lord’s harvest, rooted in the compassion of the Lord, moved by the Spirit wherever he blows, and respond to the demands of the current milieu with the “creativity and fantasy of charity”, just as St. Hannibal did in his.

36. The adaptation to changes and the renewal in the Rogationist religious life is not only in the realm of the apostolate and the mission but is equally true in the relational models in community life, the service of authority, and the formative choices.

Intercultural communities

37. The internationalization of the Congregation has resulted in the intercultural composition of communities that reflects today’s globalized and multicultural society. At present, this is particularly obvious in our formation houses and mission stations, but this will become the emerging trend in our communities in the near future as more and more exchanges of Confreres among Circumscriptions are expected in view of shared projects. However, the mere staying together of confreres from different cultural backgrounds, without “sympathetic hospitality”,¹³ the culture of encounter, and mutual respect and acceptance, does not automatically translate into joyful community life and fruitfulness in the mission. Instead of being a condition for closure into one’s cultural mindset and the rejection of the others or isolation, intercultural community life is a

¹¹ Cf. *The Rogationist mission in parishes and shrines*, Rome 2022.

¹² The adaptation and renewal of consecrated life to the changing realities are the main themes of the CICLSAL document, *New wine in new wineskins*, LEV, Rome 2017.

¹³ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 40.

privileged locus and subject of rich inculturation of the charism and concrete witness to fraternity, apostolic collaboration, and governance of the Institute. The dynamics involved in finding together the essential elements of the charism that unite amidst the rich cultural diversity of the members are complex and require openness, time, goodwill, patience, commitment, and a precise itinerary. Thus, the formation of cultural intelligence and skills should be an integral part of initial and ongoing formation.

Inter-generation and integration

38. As per the composition of the Congregation, some Circumscriptions are consistently growing in vocations and maintain young median age of members while others, which in the past sent off many missionaries, are diminishing in number and the median age consistently increasing. The sense of belonging to the same religious family motivates the exchange of Confreres among Circumscription, thus accelerating not only the increase of intercultural communities but of intergenerational communities as well. While not new, communities composed of different generations, possibly with generation gaps, pose both challenges and opportunities for new expressions of community life, spirituality, and mission.

39. Even in this area, the initial and ongoing formation is a key element. The harmonious coexistence, the respect for tradition, and its continuity, often clash with the need for renewal in the apostolate and innovation in some practices.¹⁴ The creation of structures and instances that promote dialogue and interaction, stimulating the passing on of responsibilities to future generations, without offending the opinion and contribution of those who came before, puts us in front of an issue to be discussed regarding generational integration.¹⁵ Seniority, which is valued in different degrees in cultures, should be critically read in the light of the gospel values. The establishment of communities based on the same age group should be avoided because this impoverishes the community life and at the same time creates barriers to coexistence among groups of different ages. Instead, intergenerational communities should be encouraged as much as possible. The interchange of different ages is good for religious life. Older religious can witness to younger religious the security, wisdom, joy, and sense of accomplishment of belonging to the Rogationist religious life, and at the same time, younger religious can communicate enthusiasm, dynamism, and creativity.

40. The advancement in the age of confreres is more pronounced in the elder sister Circumscriptions but this is the natural path taken by all. A related discourse is the issue of physical and mental health and growing old gracefully. Some communities are able to integrate the sick and the elderly members with care and attention. Others, however, do not have the conditions to offer the same. Providing a serene environment and quality of life for the sick and elderly Confreres is an urgent preoccupation of Circumscriptions that are actually experiencing the situation or are anticipating it to happen in the near future. Thus, they are taking steps in providing funds and structures for old-age retirements and health care needs.

The gift of fidelity and the joy of perseverance¹⁶

41. The recent document *The gift of fidelity and the joy of perseverance* gives an in-depth examination of the challenge of being faithful to one's religious vocation brought about by the current "culture of the provisional", the vocational fragility, the loss of significance of religious life, and the eventual abandonment. This worrisome reality is also experienced in our Congregation. Apart from the cases of abandonment of those in initial formation, what is even more disquieting is

¹⁴ Cf. *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 46.

¹⁵ Cf. FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, Vatican 2020, no. 199.

¹⁶ CICLSAL, *The gift of fidelity and the joy of perseverance*, Vatican 2020.

the departure of those who are already in the ongoing formation, especially by those who are just in the early years of ministry. We cannot but interrogate ourselves, our formation program, our fraternal life, and apostolic commitment not just on preventive interventions to put in place but, above all, the necessary accompaniment in both the initial and ongoing formation to safeguard the gift of fidelity and joyful persevere, and not simply a life of survival.

Economy at the service of the charism and mission¹⁷

42. The global economic crisis touches everyone, especially ordinary people. As in the poverty and want of the Church of Jerusalem at the time of St. Paul and in the Avignone Quarter in the time of St. Hannibal, the evangelical vow of poverty lived in the material and spiritual sense, in individual and communal expressions, the witness of the evangelical counsel of poverty in our times is a prophetic sign of hope.

43. Many Confreres and communities, particularly through their daily contact with the poor and most fragile in society, experience the economic crunch in an existential way. The situation has paved the occasion to return to the foundations of religious life and community, rethink and adapt the economy at the service of the charism and mission, adopt a more sober lifestyle in solidarity with the majority of the population, and spur creative ways of joyful solidarity, and a recommitment to hard work, prudence, responsibility, transparency, solicitude, and working together.

44. On the other hand, there can be resistance to changes of ways of doing and thinking, of having the mindset of maintenance of assets and comfortable lifestyle as opposed to the freedom in the Spirit and the creativity of the mission. There remains the temptation to be enclosed within the confines and concerns of one's community or Circumscription that results in indifference and lack of solidarity with the other members of our religious family as well as the inequitable distribution of resources.

A synodal Church

45. The current process of the Synod on Synodality has deepened our awareness of the fundamental vocation of the Church as the People of God journeying together. Pope Francis, in his message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations,¹⁸ reiterated that we are not just called as individuals, but we are also called together. Proper to all the followers of Christ, every Christian is a missionary disciple, and every baptized is sent.¹⁹ Each and all is a protagonist, disposed to listen attentively to God and one another in the spirit of discernment. The first step to be initiated in this process is the conversion of the heart and mind.

46. In concrete terms, synodality means sharing, which is expressed in participation, involvement, and co-responsibility. No one is excluded, stands at the sidelines to watch, or puts oneself outside. The Apostle Paul affirms that "to each one is given a particular manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). It follows that each one must responsibly seek to put to good use "the spiritual gifts or charisms which the Spirit bestows within the People of God for the building up of the one Body of Christ."²⁰

47. In the globalized and contradictory world of our time, synodality is the ecclesial prophetic response. We recover the vision of the *walking together* as *the constitutive way of the Church*, "a

¹⁷ CICLESAL, *Economy at the service of charism and mission. Guidelines*, Vatican 2018.

¹⁸ Cf. FRANCIS, *Message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, May 8, 2022.

¹⁹ Cf. The theme of the extraordinary mission month, October 2019

²⁰ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in life and mission of the Church*, 2018, n. 18.

sign and instrument of all humanity that is called to be”;²¹ *the figure* that allows us to interpret reality with God's eyes and heart; *the condition* for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. (...) only in this way can we face the complexity of this time.”²²

48. The synodal path of the Church is also the synodal path of our Congregation in the common pursuit, marked by constant tension, of our journey of contemplating together 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 Avignones of our times.

²¹ FRANCIS, *Message for the 59th World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, May 8, 2022.

²² FRANCIS, *Greeting to the 70th CEI General Assembly*, May 22, 2017.

PART TWO

THE PATH OF UNITY

Sequela Christi. Our Christian identity

49. By virtue of the baptismal consecration, all Christians have the common vocation to follow Christ – a basic element that unites all believers. For consecrated religious life, by virtue of the evangelical counsels, this following of Christ finds expression in our faithful observance of the vows lived in fraternal communion in mission. Our Christian identity, therefore, 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.”²³

50. Thus, our *sequela Christi* is an *imitatio Christi*, since the consecrated life, through the prompting 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.²⁴ We are united as men consecrated 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

51. As Rogationists, our *sequela* is characterized by following the Christ of the Rogate whose actions, sentiments, and concerns are described in the Gospel pericope in Matthew (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 him, Jesus commanded, “*Rogate ergo*” – the word, whose understanding and zeal mark our charism.²⁵

52. The 12th General Chapter delved extensively into the theme of our charism as a unifying element in 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 the inter-generation, have made diversity more evident. While welcoming and celebrating differences, which enrich the charism, it is equally important to foster unity and communion. For this reason, the charism is to be approached in a “contemplative” way – rooted and sustained by prayer – so that its expression may truly be founded on the compassion of Jesus and the obedience to his command. In effect, we see how fraternal communion is indispensable because it is the first environment where the charism is lived and deepened and where it becomes a point of unity amidst diversity among members. Likewise, it is the community, through its witnessing, services, and apostolate that makes it possible for the charism to radiate naturally and for us to lead others to share in the same charism and spirituality of the Congregation and get involved in its mission.

²³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen gentium*, no. 44.

²⁴ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, no. 22.

²⁵ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 2.

Founder and Father

53. St. Hannibal Mary, our Founder and spiritual Father, is another point of reference for our Rogationist unity and identity. We are bound to each other as his spiritual children, heirs to his precious heritage. His example is a constant inspiration for us who walk in his footsteps in the following of the Christ of the Rogate to be configured to the sentiments of the Lord of the harvest in the contemporary world. Our understanding of the Rogate can never be dissociated from that of our Father Founder who received the original inspiration from the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, necessary to constantly revisit and study his life, spiritual and apostolic experience, and teachings. For the Founder, the lack of evangelical workers is “one of the most important needs of the Catholic Church.” Inspired by the Spirit, he committed himself to pray for good workers, spread this need for *Gospel workers*, and gather a community that would assume the mission of responding to the divine command.²⁶

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

Prayer, the fulcrum of unity

55. Prayer is the most privileged expression of our unity and communion with the Holy Trinity and with one another. Gathered in the Name of Jesus, he is in our midst to pray for us and with us, making our prayer acceptable to the Father. In communion with him, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we rediscover our vocation as baptized and as Rogationist religious who form a charismatic family called and sent by the Christ of the Rogate. In prayer, we are reinforced in our identity and mission as we journey on the path of synodality.

56. Prayer is a fundamental and distinguishing mark of the Christian community from the apostolic times (cf. Acts 2:41-47) up to the present. However, for us, our very name “Rogationists” puts prayer at the center of our identity, making us a living perpetual pray-er (*orante*) to obtain from the mercy of God holy laborers in the harvest of the Lord. The rhythm of our daily life is punctuated by personal and community prayer which unites us with Jesus both in his prayer and his mission. The unison in prayer is not simply of voices but above all of intentions and concerns, which 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 fulcrum of unity. The quality of our prayer in the spirit of the Rogate is the yardstick of our identity as Rogationists.

57. Inspired by the teachings of the Founder that “just as a lit coal goes out if it remains alone”²⁷ so any flame, including that of the charism if it is not guarded and nourished in a climate of unity, runs the risk of extinguishing itself, or better still we run the risk of extinguishing ourselves and the Rogate will be entrusted to other hands,²⁸ we advocate that unity, coordination and sharing are essential aspects to achieve a common goal. Its point of departure is no other than prayer, qualified as a prayer of a united community since the prayer of a divided community, of a torn body,

²⁶ Cf. DI FRANCIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VII, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2012, pp. 150-151.

²⁷ DI FRANCIA, A. *Scritti*, typescript vol. 57, p. 96.

²⁸ See *Ibid.*, p. 90.

does not penetrate the clouds, does not reach the Father, even if it does not move him to indignation.²⁹

The Word of God: unity, communion, solidarity

58. Central to the life of the Church are the Sacred Scriptures that reveal the salvific plan of God which reaches its peak with the incarnation of the Word within the confines of human history. *Et Verbo caro factum est et habitavit in nobis* (Jn. 1:14). As viaticum, the Word of God has always accompanied and nourished the Church in its earthly pilgrimage towards its eternal homeland in heaven.

59. Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, through his actions and words, reveals what is in the heart of God. The divine Word of the Rogate reveals the interest of the Heart of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. In the contemplation of the Gospel of the Rogate, St. Hannibal penetrated the secret to the salvation of souls and dedicated his life to this divine command. For us Rogationists, the Rogate is the origin, foundation, and objective of our unity as children of the same Founder. *Origin* because the Rogate is the Word by which God has summoned us to be with Him; *foundation* because by it, God continually summons us to be with Him; and *objective* because by it we are sent out to evangelize (cf. Mk. 3:13-15).³⁰ Just as God assembles the People of God through the revelation of the Word, so does the revelation of the Divine Word of the Rogate summons and unites us as Rogationists.

60. Since it is “the Word of God that unites believers and makes them one people”,³¹ it is a door that opens us to communion, especially when it is read in the liturgical celebration. We recognize its richness whenever we read it either individually or in common, and when we meditate on it frequently. We value its teachings and its message for the benefit of our human integral growth. We study it and we preach it. And we draw from it the inspiration to be true Gospel laborers who promote solidarity and not division. It would be a counter-testimony and a betrayal of our vocation if we as Gospel laborers, having received the mandate of the Rogate, were to live fomenting divisions and quarrels. Thus, making the *rogation*³² vain.

The Eucharist, the bond of unity

61. 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!”³³

²⁹ See DI FRANCIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 325.

³⁰ Cf. *Called to be with Him. The primacy of the spiritual life*. Document of the 9th General Chapter of 1998.

³¹ FRANCIS, *Aperuit illis*, Apostolic letter in form of Motu Proprio, Vatican 2019, no. 4.

³² 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, preserves, and spreads it.

³³ JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the Rogationists on the occasion of the centenary of their foundation*, May 16, 1997, Vatican 1997, no. 4.

62. Prayer, especially the Eucharist which is the source, summit, and model of Christian prayer, is also an experience of unity manifested and strengthened by words, gestures, and attitudes of the body. It is God who takes the initiative to bring us together and in fact, brings us together to pray/celebrate.³⁴ Unity, before being a goal to be reached, is a gift to be welcomed and cherished: “We form here, gathered together, one body: let us avoid dividing among ourselves; away with evil struggles, away with quarrels, and let Christ God reign among us.”³⁵ The sacrament is for us “a sign of unity and a bond of charity.”³⁶ With Eucharistic communion, we are made sharers of one bread and one cup, united to Christ in one body we are in a condition to bear with joy the fruits of eternal life.³⁷

63. Precisely because it is a sacrament and a school of love, the Eucharist is a sacrament that gives, 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 man. (...) 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!”³⁸ The Eucharistic union, therefore, “is that which gives life and existence, increase, fruitfulness, and stability to a religious Institution.”³⁹

64. Without union in the name of Christ, it is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist.⁴⁰ 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).”⁴¹

The Rogationist Spirituality

65. The charism of the Rogate is a particularly lived experience in the Holy Spirit that finds expression in a specific Spirituality, which is characteristically biblical and eucharistic. Deeply rooted and nourished by the spirituality of the Church, the Rogationist Spirituality, a living patrimony shared by the Family of the Rogate, is a rarefaction of the one same light of the Holy Spirit.⁴² We live the rhythm of the Church liturgical year which unfolds the different mysteries of our faith, in the ordinary time and in the strong seasons, viewed also from the optic of our spirituality. Thus, while we pray with the Church as members of the one body united in Jesus the Head, we also pray as Rogationists.⁴³ The Proper Liturgy of the Family of the Rogate, the Prayer Book of the Congregation, *Rogationist at Prayer* (2022), and our proper way of praying Liturgy of the Hours,

³⁴ Cf. *Missale Romano*, Italian edition 2020, p. 137.

³⁵ *Missale Romano*, Italian edition 2020, Antiphon to the Washing of Feet, p. 139.

³⁶ *Missale Romano*, p. 625.

³⁷ Cf. *Missale Romano*, p. 267.

³⁸ DI FRANCIA, A. *Scritti*, typescript vol. 12, pp. 24-25.

³⁹ DI FRANCIA, A. *Scritti*, typescript vol. 1, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *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.

⁴¹ DI FRANCIA, A., *Scritti*, Vol. VI, Ed. Rogate, Rome 2010, p. 76.

⁴² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2684.

⁴³ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 19.

unites us in prayer though we express it in different languages, times, and places, offering a Rogationist fragrance in the incense of the Church worship.

66. In the same way that Jesus' entire life was moved by the Spirit to fulfill the mission of the Father, our Rogationist life in the Spirit is the source and nourishment of our apostolate, as exemplified by St. Hannibal.

The Rogationist mission

67. 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).

68. Our *Constitutions* art. 3 reads: "The spiritual and apostolic identity of the Congregation is realized, *according to the example and teaching of our Holy Founder*, in the mission of praying daily to obtain the 'good laborers of the Kingdom of God'; propagating everywhere this spirit of prayer and promoting vocations; being good laborers in the Church by committing ourselves in the works of charity, in the education and sanctification of the children and the youth, especially the poor and abandoned, in the evangelization, human promotion and help of the poor."⁴⁴

69. We find our unity in our specific mission in the Church that springs forth from the charism of the Rogate and traces for us a sure path to holiness. The triple dimension of the one Rogationist mission, synthesized in the verbs *praying*, *spreading*, and *being*, opens wide to limitless possibilities of the apostolate according to the signs of the times. 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 association with the same gaze of the Lord leads us to see the three components of the Rogationist mission as intrinsically united with each other and makes us overcome considering them as distinct compartments.

70. Praying daily for vocations, in response to the command of Christ of the Rogate, is our mission. The understanding of this command of prayer naturally spurs us to be its zealous announcers and propagators, which is also our mission. An authentic prayer for gospel laborers and its propagation necessarily impels us to be the answer to our prayers, that is, to be zealous laborers in the harvest of the Lord. We all share the one mission of *being* who we are as Rogationists, expressed in different forms of *doing* our particular tasks.

The Rule of Life and the service of authority

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

72. The actual physiognomy of the Congregation which reflects a diversity of cultures and generations among Confreres with a diversity of convictions and behaviors makes it almost problematic to conceive a *Rule of Life* shared and embraced by all the members of a religious

⁴⁴ *Constitutions*, art. 3.

institution.⁴⁵ Moreover, it has been observed that the *Rule of Life* is still unknown to many Confreres and thus used very little. Here enters the crucial service of authority whose particular task is to animate the community in the building of a fraternal community where each member shares one's giftedness and responsibility in living out the religious consecration meaningfully and fruitfully as one 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 changes. The *Rule* is necessary and indispensable for those who wish to remain anchored to the original charismatic inspiration, where "an itinerary of following is enclosed, qualified by a specific charism authenticated by the Church."⁴⁶ Given the importance of the *Rule of Life*, it should be studied, meditated upon, valued, and practiced in all its dimensions.

Formation

73. The ultimate goal of the initial and ongoing formation of the Rogationists is the gradual yet constant maturity in the Christ of the Rogate, conforming oneself to the Lord's same sentiments and attitudes (cf. Phil. 2:5) toward a life of joyful fidelity as Religious vowed and consecrated for a mission. This formative journey is a life-long process and commitment. It is essential, therefore, that we are formed in the art and practice of discernment which renders us not just docile and resigned but *docibiles*, always humbly tending for conversion, eagerly open to learning, and enthusiastically disposed to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷

74. While formation is a personal responsibility to be owned by each Confrere, the competent authority is also entrusted with the crucial task of accompanying, animating, and guiding it. The formation of members is to be constantly safeguarded and nourished because the present and future of the Congregation, as well as its proper renewal, depends on it.⁴⁸

75. The continuing history of the Congregation as well as its spread in different geographical and cultural contexts has intensified the demand for the adaptation and renewal of the Rogationist religious life, particularly in the aspect of formation. The diversity of formation in the Circumscriptions is a natural consequence that is easily noticeable at the first glance. There is a need to complement and balance diversity with the unity and commonality of formation within the whole Congregation, as delineated in the *Ratio Institutionis* which provides the fundamental principles, objectives, means, and the framework of contents in various stages of the Rogationist formation that is common to all. The *Directory or Manual of Formation of Circumscription*, which all the Circumscriptions have prepared, is the inculturation in their respective concrete contexts of the common formative principles of the *Ratio*.

76. The renewal, adaptation, and inculturation of formation in ever-changing contexts are dynamic processes that presuppose the "constant return to sources of all Christian life and the original spirit of the Institutes."⁴⁹ Those entrusted with the service of authority, at the general and circumscription levels, and the formation teams assume a key role in guaranteeing and promoting unity in diversity in formation. Formators are "accompaniers", "conduits", and "interpreters" of "the sources and original spirit of the Institute" to be transmitted to the new

⁴⁵ Cf. *The Rule of Life*. Document of the 11th General Chapter of 2010, no. 5.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, no. 37.

⁴⁷ Cf. *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 35.

⁴⁸ Cf. CICLSAL, *Potissimum institutioni*, Vatican 1990, no. 1.

⁴⁹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Perfectae caritatis*, no. 2.

generations of Rogationists. Thus, the selection, continuous formation, accompaniment, and guidance of formators are of utmost importance.

77. The ongoing formation is a personal commitment to deepening one's Rogationist identity, rooted in the charism. It is first of all by the daily search for personal integration and the sense of meaning and fulfillment in one's Rogationist consecration, fraternal life, and apostolate in concrete instances in the different life stages and transitions. Intense and occasional means such as updating courses, further studies, or particular experiences complement the ordinary means. The ongoing formation is the antidote to identity crisis, loss of significance, regression, and fragmentation.

PART THREE

THE PATH OF SHARING

The Rogationist synodal path

78. In step with the synodal path of the Church, our Congregation walks together in unity, coordination, and sharing in the pursuit of incarnating the charism in the various socio-cultural contexts. In fact, in synodality, the Church recognizes “the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the People of God in the responsible and ordered participation of all its members in discerning and implementing the ways of its mission.”⁵⁰ The Rogationist synodal path is expressed in the commitment to the attentive listening to the Holy Spirit, fidelity to the Church's doctrine, and at the same time, the creativity to identify and make operative the most suitable instruments for the orderly participation of all, the exchange of respective gifts, the incisive reading of the signs of the times, and effective planning in mission.⁵¹

79. In a world that exalts individualism and the centralization of everything in the 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, standpoint, and commitment in the constitution of the identity of religious life in the world today. It is necessary to recover this important *diaconia* within Consecrated Life, moving away from its extremes: the simple desire for power and the search for a *status quo*, or on the other side, one which is very prevalent today, the renunciation of all responsibility and indifference to any form of common good.

80. As in the ecclesial journey of synodality, the Rogationist synodal path requires our conversion. For some situations, conversion must be both on the personal as well as the community level. Some communities have settled into a comfort zone, or lifestyle that seeks the maintenance of stability, or in the indifference of others, as opposed to creativity, the freedom in the Spirit, and collaboration with others. Not a few times an artificial and fragmented religious life is lived. “A leveled community life that does not leave room for originality, responsibility and cordial fraternal relationships, results in little sharing in real life.”⁵²

81. History teaches that the centralization of decisions in the hands of a few, without a proper sharing of responsibility and planning, has often been the cause of choices that have not only endangered the mission and assets but the very survival of the Institutes.⁵³

82. The perseverance and faithfulness in the journey of the Rogationist synodality is a powerful prophetic sign for the Church and world that it is possible to achieve the original design of God for the family of humankind.

Rogationist communion and community

83. The theme of “unity, coordination, and sharing,” in addition to the institutional questions of our Rule of Life, is connected to daily life of communion in the community. The basic question is how our life truly is a “community”, a privileged space for the manifestation of our charismatic unity, fraternal sharing, and common mission. The concepts of “community” and “communion”

⁵⁰ *Synodality in life and mission of the Church*, no. 43.

⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 76.

⁵² *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 26.

⁵³ Cf. CICALSAL, *Economy at the service of the charism and mission. Guidelines*, Vatican 2018, nos. 3, 18, 33, 58.

manifest the theological/ecclesial reality of the “Consecrated Life”⁵⁴ which is linked to fraternal daily life, in its informal and daily moments, and to the organizations and structures that regulate Rogationist religious life, in its formal and structural moments. Communion and community must thus form one and the same reality, expressing our identity and rhythm of life.

84. In the majority of communities, the meetings or councils take place and become a real expression of our “fraternal life”, with moments of listening, dialogue, planning, and sharing with the Confreres. At the institutional level, the Assemblies and Councils (House, Family, and Formation councils), along with the role of the Superior, when they are founded in the Gospel and the tradition of our religious family, aim at achieving a style of life marked by fraternity, harmony, good progress and mutual collaboration for the common mission, and not a simple efficiency of an organization.

85. We note that the many meetings that exist, as provided for in our Rule of Life, whether at the level of General Government, Circumscription, or community, are configured as moments of ordinary and ongoing formation. With the help of the Spirit, we try to discern together the will of God, for the good of all, faithful to the vocation we have received.

Fraternity and the service of authority

86. A new understanding of authority as “service” highlights “a shift from the centrality of the role of authority to the centrality of the dynamic of fraternity.”⁵⁵ There is therefore a dynamic proper to fraternal life in which co-responsibility cannot be lacking, avoiding the mindset that *one destroys the other*.⁵⁶ Our understanding of synodality involves this principle, where authority is lived as a service that seeks to integrate and not exclude the Confreres, to let everyone share in the common goals and responsibilities.⁵⁷

87. In this sense, new models of relationships in the communities must be sought in a creative way, more human and less bureaucratic, more evangelical and less functional; “the challenge is the responsible sharing of a common project, overcoming the mere execution of obedience that does not serve the Gospel.”⁵⁸ For the smooth development of the daily activities of the community, it is essential to be inspired by the new models of relationships,⁵⁹ recovering the Gospel ideals as our principal source of inspiration (cf. Jn 15:15).⁶⁰

88. The superior, as pedagogue and educator, has an important role in the leadership of the community in awaking co-responsibility in the conscience of the Confreres. “Those who exercise power should not encourage infantile attitudes that can lead to non-responsible behavior.”⁶¹ In a general way, except for a few situations, the responses to the questionnaire paint the impression that authority is not a centralizing power in the hands of a single person, who gathers all decisions in himself, but is lived in a collegial form, seeking dialogue, and listening to the Confreres. We need to improve more and more this path of integration of the Confreres, opening channels of listening and involvement, where everyone feels co-responsible, in the different instances of Rogationist religious life.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Vita consecrata*, n. 42.

⁵⁵ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 41.

⁵⁶ Cf. CICALSAL, *The service of authority and obedience. Instruction*, Vatican 2008, no. 17.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 131

⁵⁸ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 42.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 22.

⁶⁰ Cf. RAMPAZZO, B. *Our fraternal communion of life with Christ and the poor*. Rome 2021. Father General develops the topic of fraternity as a fundamental element of the Rogationist religious consecration and mission.

⁶¹ *New wine in new wineskins*, no. 21.

89. In some situations, the objective difficulty in leadership succession still remains, due primarily to the limitations in the number and/or qualification of Confreres. In some Circumscriptions, the challenges of aging and health, as well as the lack of academic qualifications required by state regulations, greatly impede the turnover of office. In some Circumscriptions, especially the young and emerging ones, there is still a need for experience, guidance, and continuing formation.

90. It is healthy for the life of the community, and of each religious in particular, that the duration of the responsibility in the hands of the same person and with the same office for a long time be avoided. Alternatives in community leadership and coordination should be promoted, as provided for in our Rule of Life,⁶² overcoming insecurities, distrust, and fear.

Fragmentation and loss of identity

91. There are communities where, for different reasons, such as excess of activities, indifference, lack of a spirit of belonging, or difficulty in communication, some Confreres live very far from the spirit of communion and reciprocity. A review of subjects, structures, and processes, as the 13th General Chapter proposes, will be an opportune moment to reaffirm what is going well, and at the same time correct what is not compatible with Rogationist religious life.

92. We need to avoid the risk of falling into a bureaucratic and institutional routine, where we lose the synchronicity and dynamism between “all”, “some” and “one” or, from the institutional point of view, between the Circumscription, Community, and each religious. Not seldom, our meetings, assemblies, formation, and planning are done simply for the sake of doing it or because they are required by our regulations and guidelines. They end up as sheer projects, thus 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 the Circumscriptions, communities, and religious, but generate fatigue, weariness, and indifference. There is the risk of the loss of credibility in the role that such institutional mediations play for the good of religious life. Discovering their institutional and human causes and giving clear proposals for overcoming them is a challenge for reflection on the theme of our General Chapter.

Decentralization and Circumscriptions

93. The “decentralization” of our Congregation is a concrete expression of the sharing of the tasks, functions, responsibilities, and decision-making powers, which were previously vested exclusively in the central authority and are now extended to peripheral institutions, which thereby inevitably acquire a certain degree of autonomy. “Circumscriptions are living parts of the Congregation and express their presence in a particular geographical and cultural area. They remain united among themselves and depend on the General Government. The life of the Circumscriptions and the local diversity must be combined with the interests and unity of the entire Congregation.”⁶³

94. The success of the process of decentralization of an institution consists in knowing how to maintain a constant balance between the central authority, which is the guarantor of the unity and communion of the entire organism, and the peripheral realities which promote and incarnate the charism in a geographical and cultural context and which, to achieve their goal, must possess a “just autonomy”. Therefore, we walk together towards the same goal in the spirit of “dialogue” and “subsidiarity”.

⁶² Cf. *Norms*, art. 252.

⁶³ *Norms*, art. 126.

95. The decentralization of authority and economy is necessary for the development of the Congregation in the world. In fact, in the process of growth and development of a religious institute, decentralization is not an option, but a necessity, a reality that cannot be done without.

96. The continuing inquiry, planning, and organizing of our Rogationist life in different Circumscriptions have contributed to the growth of a sense of belonging and to the development of a vision of things that goes beyond the circumscribed ambit 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 has fostered the sharing of human and material resources for the achievement of the common goals of the Congregation.

Decentralization, contextualization, and inculturation

97. "Inculturation is the existential dialogue between living people and the living Gospel."⁶⁴ There can be no evangelization without inculturation since 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.

98. Decentralization facilitates our inculturated presence in a given territory, puts us in contact with the people who possess a culture and a history that mark it and make it "unique," and thus helps us to act and interact with the local context, contributing effectively to respond to the needs and problems that arise. The study of situations, discernment, and decisions are based on the concrete grasp of situations, contextual factors, language, and culture on the ground. This makes it easier to identify and adopt appropriate solutions. When circumstances call for it, the sharing of this contextualized and situational awareness by the Circumscription to the Superior General and his council greatly facilitates the process of discernment and decision-making.

99. In addition, the proximity and presence of the superiors of the Circumscriptions in the area favor frequent meetings, consultations, and dialogues with the Confreres, fostering co-responsibility and a better sharing of the service of authority. Searching together in dialogue, before deciding, facilitates the Confrere's acceptance and carrying out with dedication the mission entrusted to him.

Decentralization: an ongoing dynamic process

100. Decentralization, as a dynamic living process, passes through grey areas and critical points that challenge us to re-think and adjust. Our process of decentralization began with difficulties and in these years has encountered other difficulties, especially in the sharing of human and economic resources to achieve the apostolic goals that we have set for ourselves.

101. Like any human process in continuous evolution, decentralization must be guided, supported, verified, and reformed to achieve a just balance between autonomy and subsidiarity. This is the task of responsibility that falls on the Superior General, aided by his Council, who "has ordinary power over the entire Congregation."⁶⁵

102. Many Confreres feel the need for us to review the 36 years of experience of decentralization of the Congregation and ask whether our type of decentralization is appropriate for a modern religious Congregation devoted to evangelization and the active apostolic life in the current context of the Church.

⁶⁴ KOLVENBACH H., *Living people, living gospel*. Address to the International Workshop on Native Ministry, Anishinabe, Canada, October 12, 1993.

⁶⁵ *Constitutions*, art. 152.

103. One area of difficulty is what some Confreres consider as the “excessive autonomy” of the Circumscriptions which seems to disregard elements of centralization as foreseen in our norms. The General Government, faced with such a situation, is forced to have recourse to the juridical action of the “sanatoria” to regularize and correct an act that has not been duly authorized. Sometimes the General Government’s intervention seems to be considered an “act of unwelcome interference”, although aside from being entirely licit and legitimate, proves to be 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 ourselves, discern in prayer and reflection, to seek a just remedy to this situation.

104. 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 observed that structures function when there is the openness of the Confreres toward the common goal, purpose, and objective of the entire Congregation. When all are animated and guided by the same charismatic inspiration and are striving towards the same apostolic goal, then a mutual agreement is achieved which is translated into the elaboration and realization of a common project in the areas of spiritual life, formation, and mission wherein all are involved.

105. Centralization and decentralization are not two opposing poles but complementary ones. They occur not only on a “legalistic and administrative” plane but should primarily take place in the ambit of collaboration and sharing of vision-mission and resources, whether human, spiritual, apostolic, or economic. Some warn against the danger of “centralized dirigisme” and call for greater flexibility in the relationship between the center and the periphery. Giving too much weight to the legalistic relationship between the Circumscriptions and the General Government could inevitably jeopardize the relationship of love and communion.

Interdependence of Circumscriptions and the presiding role of the General Government

106. Unity, built on communion with the other Circumscriptions and with the General Government, is an inestimable wealth, a precious gift of the Holy Spirit, for which we must always be grateful to the Lord and continuously 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 esteemed and appreciated by the Confreres, who are convinced that unity, communion, participation, and coordination are the foundation of good *governance* in the Congregation.

107. 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”.

108. Our Circumscriptions and communities cannot afford to get caught up in one’s own problems and enclosed in a particular vision almost exclusively with what interests them. A myopic vision deprives one of the awareness of what other communities and Circumscriptions are experiencing, resulting in a lack of attentiveness and solicitousness. Rather, through the leading role of the General Government, we strive together to acquire a vision that sees the higher and universal perspective which embraces the Congregation and to work together to achieve them.

109. Furthermore, it has been suggested that some sectors of religious life and apostolate, which are presently delegated almost totally to the Circumscriptions, should be assigned to the care and responsibility of the General Government because of their nature and importance in which the future of the Institute depends: initial formation, ongoing formation, the mission, and economy.

Fostering a culture of encounter and dialogue

110. The Rogationist synodal path at all levels (between the General Government and the Circumscriptions, among the Circumscriptions, and between the Circumscription and its Communities) is characterized by a culture of encounter and dialogue founded on respect and trust. This is enhanced by constant communication and meetings in the genuine desire to know each other and be aware of each one's concrete situations, which paves the way to common discernment, coordination, sharing of human and material resources, and above all, in living out our fraternal communion, which is central to our life as consecrated persons.

111. Improving and perfecting our communication in the Congregation, Circumscriptions, and communities have been pointed out by the Confreres. Communication reinforces unity, coordination, and sharing. Its goal is not only to be a channel of information, but they are above all to be a means of formation and transformation. Communication is a fundamental component of our synodal journey.

Chapter and Assembly

112. The Chapters and Assemblies of the Circumscriptions are certainly positive since they encourage the interest, participation, and co-responsibility of all. Their success, however, largely depends on their preparation and involvement of all the Confreres by means of prayer, study, discussions, and deepening.

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

114. Where it is deemed opportune to choose the participation by the assembly, the possible risk of "assemblearism" must be avoided. Choices should be driven by issues deepened in the working groups and not dictated by the numbers, emotions, and personalities. Moreover, the Chapter and Assembly should not be turned into an almost exclusively electoral dynamic and an "agora" at the mercy of whoever shouts the loudest and possesses a stronger and more captivating polemical argumentation. It is not the venue of interest and pressure groups and party-based forms of membership, also because of cultural differences. These divisive tendencies inevitably exclude, distance, and separate. They are drifts that contradict unity, charity, and communion.

Spiritual and cultural patrimony

115. Our sharing is first of all that of our common spiritual and cultural patrimony handed down by the Founder and our tradition. The sharing in the charism enhances our sense of belonging to the same religious family and renders the fulfillment of its mission more effective. This is one area that we need to prioritize and foster.

116. There has been a significant increase in the production, translation, and publication of Rogationist literature and other resources, as well as creativity in the use of social media and the online platform for popular dissemination. Besides, a good number of Rogationist literature has been translated into various languages used in the Congregation. The work of translation should continue by consolidating and expanding the team of translators.

117. In some Circumscriptions, the Sector of the Rogate, the Rogate Vocation Centers, and the Institutes of Vocation Ministry⁶⁶ have been actively developing materials and programs at the service of vocation ministry in the local Church and in collaboration with other Congregations, even with recognition by Higher Institutes of Education or Universities. The various newsletters and magazines of the Communities usually contain articles about the charism and the Founder intended for a wider readership outside the Congregation.

118. Aware of the role of social media and technology in the contemporary world, we should maximize the use of these channels in promoting our charism and apostolate. The challenge remains to improve the websites of the Congregation and Circumscriptions and to provide well-trained staff for the Rogationist media apostolate. We should continue to produce prayer aids for vocations, journals, reflections, blogs/vlogs, slides, videos, and audio clips about the Founder, the charism, and our apostolate. It is hoped that in the various fields of ministry and apostolate, members of the Rogate Family will be able to integrate aspects of the Founder's charism and teachings into their lessons, sermons, talks, conferences, etc.

119. It has been observed that the diffusion of the charism and the Founder in social media and the press are still mostly at the popular level. There seems to be a decrease, if not a stalemate, in scholarly and formal studies on these topics. The *Rogationist Study Center*, whose service is to stimulate the exchange and deepening of ideas and reflections, research, and production of these scientific studies, seems to be in hibernation. Hence, there is an urgent need to reorganize and render it more functional and effective. Moreover, we must continue to motivate and guide our Religious students to incorporate the charism into their studies. This ultimately leads to the production of new materials, and the increase of our understanding and interpretation of the charism and its meaning in contemporary times.

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

121. The zeal in proclaiming the *Gospel of Rogate* should be cultivated among the confreres from their initial formation. The choice of destining Confreres for missions in another cultural and geographical setting must be made after prudent and thoughtful discernment and the missionary adequately prepared.

122. Having materials, however, is not enough. They should be made available and accessible to the Confreres. The library or reading room of communities should have a section for Rogationist literature and resources for easy access. If possible, a virtual library of Rogationist literature should be created to serve for the storage and exchange of resources: books, periodicals, magazines, photos, digital art designs, videos, music, songs, prayer aids, etc. The availability and accessibility of resources should match the interest and use of the Confreres and communities, which unfortunately is currently weak.

123. While recognizing the many possibilities for improving our appreciation of the charism and the Founder, some communities find it difficult to organize initiatives for this purpose because of their many commitments and tasks. While some express enthusiasm for the personal and communal desire to grow in the Rogationist life and apostolate, others lose interest, remain stagnant, and find no meaning in their current situations.

⁶⁶ For example: IPV (Brazil), PIVM (Philippines), FISH (Indonesia), and the Course at LUMSA (Italy).

Sharing of human resources

124. Our primary resources are the Confreres whom God has called to live the Rogationist consecration and mission. Both the quantity and quality of our Confreres are crucial factors for living our fraternal communion and apostolate significantly and fruitfully.

125. While in some Circumscriptions there is a constant numerical increase of new members, other Circumscriptions experience statis and serious shortage in numbers. 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 and concerted effort among Circumscriptions

126. The formation of members needs reinforcement and sustainability in both human, economic, and structural resources because the future of the Congregation depends largely on it. In front of the scarcity in the number of personnel, particularly of formators, which is prevalent in some Circumscriptions, it has been pointed out that pooling together our resources may help resolve this pressing issue. The welcome extended by the Postulancy, Novitiate, and Theologate of sister-Circumscriptions to the formands from other Circumscriptions is not just for practical reasons but offers a rich formative ground to grow in “intercultural”, cultural competence, and intercultural community living. This discourse is equally true, if not more pressing, for the ongoing formation of Confreres who comprise the greater part of the Congregation’s membership. Furthermore, the personnel is necessary for our apostolic endeavors, not simply in the maintenance of works expressing the charism but in expanding their socio-ecclesial significance as well as in venturing into new frontiers.⁶⁷

127. The redistribution and sharing of personnel will become increasingly necessary in the coming years, especially in Circumscriptions suffering the shortage of personnel. But this process will only have a positive outcome if it is not improvised, but well thought out, prepared, and programmed, according to a concrete plan, identifying a path to manage this integration over time. A community formed by Confreres of different origins and cultures who live in “sympathetic hospitality” offers to the globalized but divided world a “highly prophetic” sign of the evangelical value of universal fraternity⁶⁸ and the joy of working together for Christ’s mission.

Sharing of economic resources

128. Today, faced with the challenge arising from the global economic crisis and worsened by the pandemic crises, we are called to live with a new paradigm and vision of administration that is open, collegial, decentralized, and at the same time connected to the larger reality of the entire Congregation. It is no longer possible to think in isolation as if the economic issues are exclusively the problem of one community or one Circumscription. Instead, we are called to address them by “working together” which involves awareness of the situation, coordination and sharing in planning, ways of thinking, culture, and procedures.⁶⁹ The synodal principle must involve the management of goods and the sharing of the gifts of the Divine Providence and the work of all, regardless of the place and the apostolate that is carried out.

129. What is required of us is a change of mentality that will allow us to live in a more human way, with a typically Rogationist lifestyle that is imbued by the gospel logic of giftedness and gratuity, of receiving-a-gift and being-a-gift: *Freely you have received, freely you are to give.* (Mt. 10:8). We should allow ourselves to be conquered by compassion and charity for the abandoned and

⁶⁷ Cf. *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, no. 16.

⁶⁸ Cf. *New wine in new wineskins*. nos. 33 and 40).

⁶⁹ Cf. *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, no. 32-33.

weary crowds of little ones and the poor, who are like a flock without a shepherd. As it was for Jesus and so it was for our Founder. Our evangelical vow of poverty is lived both personally and collectively, characterized by generous solidarity and sharing, responsibility, industry, and trust in the Divine Providence.

130. 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 performing and most efficient organization. Good results come if, in addition to competence, earnestness, and professionalism, we know how to cultivate the spiritual and human values of fraternal relationships, such as openness to the culture of the other, the spirit of humility, the willingness to learn, the interior disposition to detachment from goods to favor better management and distribution of economic resources. Likewise, we get better results if we know how to cultivate a deeply vocational formation, understood and lived as a renunciation of personal interests and a willing and generous response to the divine call, and a responsible commitment to apostolic and missionary work.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, nos. 14-16.

PART FOUR

THE PATH OF COORDINATION

131. Pope Francis and the present process of the Synod on Synodality have underlined in both conceptual and concrete terms that synodality is a “constitutive element of the Church”,⁷¹ an ancient but always new theme in the Church. Our 13th General Chapter’s deepening of the themes of unity, sharing, and coordination clearly manifests that synodality finds its full significance and manifestation in living our Rogationist religious life today.

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

133. While on the one hand synodality can be understood in a simple way, because it is an essential dimension of the life of the Church, on the other, it retains its complexity, especially in relation to its operability, because ideals are not always easily achieved in the structures and bodies that affect our daily lives. The path of coordination offers practical orientations and operative choices for the better realization of synodality, unity, and sharing in our Congregation so much needed today as we continue to live out our charism and carry out our mission in new and ever-changing contexts.

Local Community

134. The service of authority of the superior or responsible has a key role in our communities, primarily in animating the religious life of each member, as well as in the efficient organization of the apostolate, thus valuing each Confrere as a protagonist in the common journey of consecration and mission. To render this service more effective, it is recommended to

- a. Plan out strategies and processes for the leadership succession, particularly in terms of the selection and preparation of leaders.
- b. Introduce first-time superiors and council members to their competencies by means of a specific formation and workshops.
- c. Organize regular meetings and updating of all superiors and their respective councils. These are concrete means for the Circumscription to accompany them and to coordinate among them.
- d. Prepare a manual or practical guide for local superior and council which is a useful tool in carrying out their responsibilities.
- e. Prepare together the annual personal and community life project of growth in religious life that delineates the goals, means, and periods, as suggested in the document *Stir into flame of gift of God that is in you (2 Tm 1:6)*. *Project of Rogationist permanent formation* (2002). Considered in the light of the orientations of the Chapters and Assemblies, this common project is both a guidepost and a point of verification.

⁷¹ FRANCIS, *Address on the occasion of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, Vatican, October 17, 2015.

- f. Ensure that the moments of encounter, particularly the council and family meetings, are regularly held and recorded.

Circumscription

135. The service of authority of the superior and council of the Circumscription fosters the sense of belonging and guides the synodal journey in unity and sharing of each member and each community in the Circumscription.

- a. What was said above about the local superiors and councils, namely: leadership succession, introductory formation, updating and accompaniment, and practical guide manuals, are also applicable to the Superior and Council of Circumscription.
- b. The primary role of Councilors is to give counsel and support to the Superior of the Circumscription in his role of leadership.⁷² At the same time, the Councilors are also assigned to animate, coordinate, and oversee particular sectors of service, under the guidance of the Superior of Circumscription.
- c. The visitation according to the norms⁷³ is an effective means for the Superior of the Circumscription to encounter each Confrere and community, know their situation and concerns, offer affirmation and encouragement, and suggest solutions to problems. It is first of all fraternal, although following the canonical requisites. There should be due preparation so that the visitation becomes fruitful. Sometime after the visitation, there should be a system of verification of whether resolutions taken are implemented.
- d. Apart from the canonical visitation, the Superior of Circumscription initiates 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

136. The synodal path is an effort of all the Circumscriptions, guided by the Superior General, to be in syntony with each other. Within one's competence in the spirit of subsidiarity, each component participates in the process of discussion, discernment, decision making, and implementation of a common project. Without giving up the legitimate concerns relative to a particular Circumscription, synodality aims at uniting together our energies and resources. Instead of doing it each on its own, the orchestrated and coordinated effort can efficiently and expeditiously bring the Circumscriptions to the attainment of its goals. The coordination of the General Government with the Circumscriptions and among the Circumscriptions 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. When necessary, ulterior meetings can be organized. These encounters have been proven to be a very rich venue for knowing the situations and concerns of each Circumscription, for expressing availability of support, for planning, coordinating, implementing, and verifying together the projects identified.
- b. A Conference of the Superiors and Councils of all the Circumscriptions with the General Council which presents its six-year action plan based on the indications of the General Chapter. In so doing, the orientations of the General Chapter will cascade into the action plans of the Circumscriptions and the life of the communities.

⁷² Cf. *Norms*, art. 229.

⁷³ Cf. *Constitutions*, art. 165.

- c. Designation of the Councilors of the Province and Quasi-Province analogous to the sectors of the General Councilors. Evaluate how to further enhance the performance of the Secretariats by sectors, each composed of the General Councilor and the Circumscription Councilors of the sector.
- d. A formation workshop for the Superior and his Council, the Treasurer, and the Secretary of the Circumscription at the beginning of their term to introduce them to their respective roles and competence. This includes discussion on practical orientations with the Superior General and the counterpart Councilor, Treasurer, and Secretary. The *Practical Guide for Superiors of Circumscriptions*, which is constantly updated, is a very useful tool for particular situations and procedures.
- 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

137. 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, but even to draw up new directions of the journey to take according to the signs of the times. It is both a point of arrival and a point of departure of the itinerary of the Congregation which goes beyond their celebration and is pursued in concrete steps in the communities and Circumscriptions. We can further enhance the Chapters and Assemblies to respond better to our needs by means of 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 should gather three main priorities that each Circumscription has identified. Besides the indications of the General Chapter, the General Government will consider these priorities and try to combine them into its strategic plan for the six-year period.
- c. So that the orientations of the General Chapter will cascade in the governance of the Circumscriptions, the Chapter and Assembly of the Circumscription should take into consideration the General Chapter Document and the six-year Program of the General Government and verify how they can be inculturated in their contexts, thus aiming at synergy and avoiding parallel paths.
- d. The newly constituted government of the Circumscription prepares its four-year plan to be presented to the General Government.
- e. There is a need to set appropriate normative guidelines on the celebration of General Assemblies of Circumscriptions.

Effective use of documents

138. The documents that emanate from the competent bodies and authorities, such as the Document of the Chapter and Assembly, the Program of Government, Circular letters, Guidelines and Instructions, Reports of the Visitations, etc., are significant signposts in the journey of the Congregation. They are translations into a synthetic formulation of the efforts of reflections, discussions, and discernments undertaken on vital issues of the Rogationist religious life. They are

not intended to be mono-directional but to elicit an operational response from the destinatee. Thus, it is suggested to introduce an effective feedback system in Communities that includes the documents' reception, reflection/discussion, action plan, implementation, and verification. Furthermore, apart from being descriptive, the Report of the Visitation should also give an evaluation and proposals which serve as points for monitoring in the succeeding Visitations.

Reconfiguration of Circumscriptions

139. The Congregation, as a living body, has experienced various shifts and transformations in the course of its history. The Congregation's decentralization introduced 36 years ago has undergone various reconfigurations and is expected to continue to do so. Such processes necessitate the attentive accompaniment on the part of the General Government and the involvement of the Circumscriptions. It would be helpful to provide guidelines and norms regarding the stages, procedures, and modalities to carry out in the institution of new Circumscriptions or the merging of existing ones.

Networking

140. Networking is an effective way of synodality and synergy, particularly in the interaction with people in the same sector of service, sharing of information and experiences, alignment of a common vision-mission, planning, sharing of resources, formation, and implementation of common projects. It is already practiced by some Circumscriptions, especially in the socio-educational apostolate and the vocation ministry, even by working in partnership with other organizations that share the same cause.⁷⁴ Expanding networking at the level of the entire Congregation should be explored.⁷⁵

Organisms

141. Several organisms have been instituted to render better services to the entire Congregation. There is a need to study and propose a concrete action plan on how to improve their organization and function more effectively, an observation and request which has been recurring in the previous General Chapters. The following are mentioned in particular:

- a. The Secretariat or Commission of a sector, overseen by the competent authority, can be an effective body for generating ideas, planning, coordination, implementation, and verification. Some areas of service may even overlap among Secretariats, thus joint initiatives among them should be fostered. At the General level, it is headed by the Councilor General, and the members are his counterpart Circumscription Councilor for the sector. At the level of the Circumscription, it is composed of the Councilor in charge, as head, and other Confreres who work in that field.
- b. The Rogationist Research Center (Centro Studi Rogazionista) has a key role in fostering inculturation by means of stimulating and encouraging in-depth studies on the charism and other Rogationist themes, organizing forums for research presentations and publishing research papers, particularly through the journal, *Studi Rogazionisti*. There is a need to revive this Center with the collaboration of the Circumscriptions.

⁷⁴ Examples: A unified branding and single management system of Rogationist Schools; the inter-Congregational collaboration in the Institutes of Vocation Ministry; membership in ecclesial organisms.

⁷⁵ Examples: Networks of Rogate Vocation Centers, Institutes of Vocation Ministry, Socio-educational Institutes, Formators, and Formation Houses of the different Circumscriptions.

- c. At the central or circumscription level, organize *formal forums* and venues of sharing of research studies, such as conferences and workshops (virtually or in-person) highlighting the life, teachings, charism, and spirituality of St. Hannibal.
- d. The Commission on Translations has substantially contributed to rendering the Rogationist literature accessible in other languages to the benefit of the Confreres and formands alike. Its service can be fostered further by means of establishing sub-teams of translators and editors in coordination with the Circumscriptions. This expedites the work and ensures the quality of translation.
- e. Furthermore, it has been proposed to establish a virtual library for easy access to the Rogationist literature and related materials in different languages, so essential for initial and ongoing formation and research. Besides, initiatives should be organized to encourage Confreres to read and study our literature, such as providing an “official” presentation or an accompanying reading guide to them.
- f. There is a need to maximize the potential of the communications technology by establishing a Rogationist Media Center at the central level that serves as the clearinghouse of news, information, and other materials from the different Circumscriptions and their organisms. There should be a concrete action plan on how to improve our current websites and social media platforms, help establish new ones, effectively link them together, and adequately prepare personnel for this service.
- g. The charism of the Rogate continues to attract and inspire both the laity and the clergy to commit themselves to the crusade of praying and working for vocations. The Daughters of Divine Zeal, the Union of Prayer for Vocations (UPV), the Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations (PUPV), the Missionaries of the Rogate, the associated lay groups under the Union of Rogationist Associations (UAR), and the non-associated laity are our partners for the same cause.

142. There is a need to follow up concretely on the objectives of the re-launch of the UPV and the PUPV made several years ago. Furthermore, there is a need to explore how to foster the path of encounter, dialogue, and collaboration among the different components of the Family of the Rogate. As what is delineated in their respective By-laws, this includes the internal organizational structure at the national and local levels, the formation program of the members, their growth in commitment to the charism, their involvement in the mission of the Congregation, and their links to the other components of the same charismatic family.

143. The Councilors of the sectors of the Rogate and the Laity and their respective Secretariats play a vital role in the animation of and coordination with the ecclesiastical assistants, the leaders, and the respective governing bodies of these associations. It is worth exploring at the level of the Circumscription, where it does not yet exist, the establishment of an umbrella organization analogous to the UAR in order to foster mutual support and edification among the Rogationist laity. The same is said of the collaboration with the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Missionaries of the Rogate.

144. The programmed International Symposium of the Laity, although not realized due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has prompted the Circumscriptions to carry out localized symposia and congresses which became venues for a renewed commitment and exploration of a better organization of the various groups. These initiatives should be followed up and further enhanced.

Formation

145. The Rogationist formation, both initial and ongoing, is a fecund area for unity, sharing, and coordination. The formation in the different cultural and geographical contexts has made the richness of inculturation evident. We welcome and value this diversity, while at the same time, striving to maintain unity in formation, which the *Ratio Institutionis* delineates.

146. As what has already been indicated in the 12th General Chapter, it has been suggested to pursue the revision of the *Ratio Institutionis* (1996). Apart from 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 as regards the principles, goals, and contents in the various stages of formation which are inculturated in the Directory/Manual of Formation of the Circumscriptions. Moreover, it has been suggested that both initial and ongoing formation be incorporated into a single *Ratio*, highlighting that formation is a lifelong journey.

147. Furthermore, it has been proposed to study the structural and institutional dimensions of the ongoing formation and the sabbatical period⁷⁶ and develop their program even at the inter-Circumscription level. The ongoing formation is already mentioned in the current *Ratio* and is the main theme of the *Rogationist Project of Permanent Formation* (2002), but it is widely felt in the Congregation the pressing and growing demand for a concrete itinerary, contents, personnel, structures, collaboration, and coordination among the Circumscriptions that respond to the call of the times.

148. For both initial and ongoing formation, it has been suggested to study and plan out the organization and preparation of a team of experts among the Confreres who can be itinerant or online resource persons conducting well-organized and stimulating spiritual exercises or courses for the Family of the Rogate. This team is coordinated at the level of the Circumscription and the General Government.

149. Similarly, it has been suggested to study the possibility of setting up a Rogationist Distance Learning School that organizes systematic online training programs for the Confreres and our collaborators in the different sectors, or courses on Rogationist religious life for those in the ongoing formation as well as for those in the different stages in the initial formation,⁷⁷ even across the different Circumscriptions. These online inter-circumscriptional formation programs will enhance mutual familiarity among our Confreres, cultural exchange and sharing of the inculturation of the charism, spirituality, and mission.

150. To reinforce further the formation of the charism, apart from the program offered in the initial formation, it has been suggested to study the possibility of organizing an intense period of charismatic formation for the candidates for the priesthood prior to their ordination or in the first years of their ministry, or in the case of the Coadjutor Brothers, before their profession of perpetual vows. Similar to the formation of formators, this program may be organized by the General Government and takes in participants from different Circumscriptions. In a blended format of online and face-to-face settings, the program would conclude with a pilgrimage to Messina enriched by moments of study and a spiritual retreat.

⁷⁶ Cf. *New wine in new wineskins*, Vatican 2017, no. 35e.

⁷⁷ Initially provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the various online activities undertaken by Circumscriptions, like courses, workshops, webinars, meetings, and prayer encounters, can continue to be an efficient avenue for initial and ongoing formation. Examples: council meetings, meetings by sectors of service and specific tasks, courses for formands (postulants, novices, and young religious), etc.

151. Formators assume a crucial role in both initial and ongoing formation, thus, the investment done so far in the formation of formators, organized at the level of the Circumscriptions and at the General level, should continue.

Human resources

152. A system of coordination is necessary for the exchange of personnel, which must be carried out by the General Government, bearing in mind the formative and apostolic project of the Congregation.

153. The experience of exchanges of personnel among Circumscriptions and collaboration for common apostolic projects has been continuously growing. The *Guidelines for the exchanges of personnel between Rogationists Circumscriptions*⁷⁸ reiterate that these exchanges should be the fruit of common discernment, reflection, study, discussion, and planning. It includes the identification and adequate preparation of suited personnel and the related economic aspects. The process involves the coordination between the Superior General and the Circumscriptions, especially in the instances of the Conference of the Superiors of Circumscriptions.

154. The Rogationist International Student Residence in Rome, configured as the formation center of Rogationist religious students coming from various Circumscriptions in view of their insertion into the communities and apostolate of the Italian Provinces, is an attempt to enhance the sharing of human resources. Starting even from the initial formation, the intercultural formative community of formators and formands of different nationalities develop both intercultural competence and insertion into the socio-cultural and ecclesial contexts of Europe where they will be engaged in the future. If deemed opportune, it is worth studying the possibility of replicating such experience in other Circumscriptions.

Material resources

155. The ordinary modality of sharing economic resources in the Congregation is by means of the percentage, based on the economic condition and needs of the house or Circumscription. Every community and Circumscription should strive to give its share even if it is just the “widow's mite” because it is a concrete way of expressing the sense of belonging to the Congregation.

156. There have been other means of sharing economic resources, such as the Central and Circumscription Missionary Office, our various Non-Governmental Organizations (ONLUS), the Anthonian Benefactors Office, the Rogationist Missionary Day, and bidding for funds, which have sustained our socio-educational and charitable institutes, distant and missionary adoption, apostolate, and projects. Moreover, the communities have responded quickly and generously to the occasional appeal to solidarity in times of humanitarian crisis and natural disasters.

157. 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.⁷⁹

158. 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*, Operational Proposal no. 112, had already asked the Congregation to define its “Stable Patrimony”. The present Chapter Assembly would be an opportune occasion to

⁷⁸ RAMPAZZO B., Circular letter no. 220/2020 dated October 24, 2020.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Seeing the crowds*, no. 109.

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.⁸⁰

Toward a common project

159. Synodality is also expressed concretely in working together for a “common project” because it offers moments to deepen fraternal dialogue and discussion among the Circumscriptions that will result in concrete orientations that will allow for a better distribution of resources, in order to faithfully live above all our “founding charism” centered on prayer to the Lord of the harvest and charity toward the little ones and the poor.

160. It is within the competence of the General Government to open or close houses or works, in coordination and dialogue with the Circumscriptions where they belong. Such a decision is the fruit of reflection, careful study, planning, and discussion 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 that a Circumscription is unable to continue keeping a House open due to lack of personnel, before deciding to close it and putting the property for sale, lease, or giving it for free use to other entities, the idea of entrusting the management of that House to another Rogationist Circumscription should be considered. The Superior General coordinates this entrustment with the Superiors of Circumscription both in the process of discernment and in the implementation phase.⁸¹
- b. In terms of new openings of missionary presences and stations in new territories, either on the initiative of the General Government or on the proposal of a Circumscription, their establishment and direction should be placed directly under the competence of the Superior General. Circumscriptions are always involved in the conceptualization, 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 can authorize a Circumscription to start a presence (missionary station or community) in the geographical area where another Circumscription is present, after consulting and coordinating with the Superiors of the concerned Circumscriptions and evaluating its opportunity.⁸²
- d. As for the Confreres to be assigned in the new openings, they should have the suitability and be provided a remote and immediate preparation. To ensure community life, the number of religious personnel for the new opening should be guaranteed, avoiding the prolonged period of Confreres living alone.

⁸⁰ “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.” CICALSAL, *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, no. 38.

⁸¹ Cf. RAMPAZZO R., *Cir. Let., Guidelines for the exchanges of personnel between Rogationists Circumscriptions*, nos. 17-18.

⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 20.

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