

GIORGIO NALIN, RCJ



COME TO THE WATERS

**Biblical-Liturgical Renewal
and Rogationist Spirituality**

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ROME, JULY 1 2002

Table of Contents

Introduction

Part 1

Journeying with the Church

The life of the first Christian Community

The primacy of spiritual life

To contemplate the face of Christ

Called to stay with Him

To restart afresh from Christ

To pray according to the spirit of the Church

Liturgical prayer and renewal of consecrated life

In the footsteps of Father Hannibal

So as to live the Charism

The steps to accomplish

Part 2

Sacred Scripture and Liturgy

On the road to Emmaus

Sacred Scripture and Liturgy

To know the Scripture

Living the Liturgy

The Lectionary: “*lectio divina*” of the Church

The homily
Liturgy and “pious exercises”
Word, Liturgy and Life
Liturgy and inculturation
The task of formation

Part 3

Rogationist Spirituality

Our “original inspiration”

Rogationist Spirituality

Unified Spirituality

Pedagogical itineraries

Assiduous and united in prayer

In the newness of the Spirit

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

*As the deer longs for running water,
so my soul longs for you, my God.
My soul is thirsting for God, the living God: When shall I
go and behold the face of God? (Ps 42: 2-3)*

Dearest,

I like to open this circular letter of mine on the chosen theme of permanent formation for this year, which is “*Biblical-Liturgical Renewal and Rogationist Spirituality*,”¹ with the words of the prophet Isaiah: “*You who are thirsty, come to the water*” (Is 55:1).

Water is the source of life; it quenches thirst, revitalizes what is arid, cleanses, and purifies.

The Scriptures present water as the symbol of a deeper thirst: “My soul is thirsting for God” (Ps 42:3; 62,2), and as Messianic sign: “*The thirsty ground will become springs of water*” (Is 35:7); “*with joy you will draw water at the*

¹ Cf. IX General Chapter, *Called to stay with Him*, 97c; *Together to Cross the Threshold of the Year 2000*. Outlines for the 1998-2004 planning of the General Government 1998-2004, 21e.

fountain of salvation” (Is 12;3). In meeting the Samaritan woman, Jesus speaks of “his water”: “*Whoever drinks the water I give, will never be thirsty, the water I give shall become in him a spring of water welling to eternal life*” (Jn 4:14); and in the last day of the feast of “Booths” he proclaims in a loud voice: “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me; let him drink who believes in me. Scripture has it: from within him, rivers of living water shall flow*” (Jn 7:37-38). John, the evangelist, specifies: “*He said this about the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified*” (Jn 7:39). What is, or better yet, who is this symbolic water, to which Jesus invites all to drink in order not to be thirsty anymore forever? It is the Word of God, the Word that was made flesh (cf Jn 1,14). Therefore, it is Jesus, who died and risen for our salvation, made alive by the Spirit's power and the “giver of life” through his sacramental presence in the Church.²

The words of the prophet Isaiah, “*You who are thirsty, come to the water,*” therefore sound for us as an invitation to get closer to the genuine sources of Christian life, which are the Word of God and the Liturgy, above all, the “*sacred mystery of the Eucharist.*” The Vatican Council II defines God’s Word as “the pure and perennial source of spiritual life,” while it considers the Liturgy as “the summit toward

² *Prebyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

which the Church's action tends and, at the same time, the source from which all of her energy derives.”

At the same time these prophetic words are intended for us as an invitation to quench continually our thirst at the sources of our specific spirituality, constituted by the charism, mission,³ spirit of the Founder, sound traditions and, in particular way, the Rogationist celebrations.⁴

The Vatican Council II acknowledges and indicates the renewal of religious life properly as a continuous return “*to the sources of every form of Christian life and the original inspiration of the institutes.*”⁵

The Word of God, Liturgy and the “original inspiration” of our Institute: here are in synthesis the sources of our life in the Spirit and the theme of this letter of mine for the common journey of formation: the Word celebrated in the Liturgy and incarnated in life, the charism enlightened by the Word, nourished by the Liturgy, witnessed in fraternal life in community and in its manifold apostolic expressions.⁶

³ Cf. *Constitutions*, 4-5.

⁴ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 51

⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2.

⁶ Cf. *Called to Stay with Him*, 46.49.51.61.

The theme of this letter “*Biblical-Liturgical Renewal and Rogationist Spirituality*,” in line with the planning of the General Government,⁷ and my previous letters intended for permanent formation,⁸ carries on the deepening of the capitular document “*Called to stay with Him*,”⁹ to promote the primacy of spiritual life. This theme is also fully attuned to the Church’s life and the pastoral, repeatedly exhorting us in these times to journey in the perspective of holiness and pointing out the Word of God and the Liturgy as the main points of reference of such a journey.¹⁰

In particular, this letter of mine has a threefold objective: to help welcome and live the spirit of the biblical and liturgical renewal promoted by the Vatican Council II;¹¹ to solicit all of us to fall in love evermore with the Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy, as main factors of renewal of personal spiritual life, of fraternal life in community and of charismatic and apostolic fervor;¹² to re-vitalize continually in us the

⁷ *Together to Cross the Threshold of the Year 2000*. Outlines for the 1998-2004 planning of the General Government, 1999 (cf. particularly nn. 14d-f.i.l.; 21d-e).

⁸ *With the Church into the new millennium. To live the Jubilee in the spirit of the Rogate*, 1999; *In the footsteps of Father Hannibal* , 2000

⁹ Cf. nn. 46-68.

¹⁰ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 93-95; *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 30-41.

¹¹ Particularly in the *Constitutions: Sacrosanctum Concilium, Dei Verbum*.

¹² Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 61.

charism and the Rogationist spirituality in the light of the Word of God celebrated in the Liturgy.

The letter, premised on the demand of the primacy of spiritual life, introduces the biblical and liturgical renewal as a sign of fidelity to the Church's journey and the spirit of the Founder and as intrinsic demand of the charism itself (*first part*). It develops the themes of the Word of God and the Liturgy as sources and fundamental elements of the life in the Spirit (*second part*). It deals with the topic of the Rogationist spirituality that springs from the original inspiration connected with God's Word and the Liturgy and manifested in the Rogationist's life, apostolate, and, in particular, in the "proper" celebrations. Finally, it suggests pedagogical itineraries and concrete tools to welcome and live the spirit of the biblical and liturgical renewal and rekindle the Rogationist spirituality in light of Christ's mystery (*third part*).

PART 1

JOURNEYING WITH THE CHURCH

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42)

The Life of the First Christian Community

The life of the First Christian Community is the icon of religious life.

1. *“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers ... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s own need” (Acts 2:42,44).* The author of the *Acts of the Apostles* thus describes the life of the first Christian community. Through his words, he allows us a clear glimpse of the essential connotation of the Church’s life at all times. It is a community assembled around the Apostles, listening to the Word of God, celebrating the Eucharist and raising supplications to the

Lord, radiating the Word that saves with the joyful testimony of the fraternal love, with the preaching and with the charity which becomes a sharing of goods and life.¹³

The above-quoted text of the *Acts* is an “icon” of the Church’s life and every Christian community. Over the centuries, it stands as an archetype of religious life. This religious life, in its different and manifold historical expressions, mirrors the life of the Church and the manifestation of her mystery and *mission*.¹⁴ Therefore, religious life finds its genetic and existential code, its *raison d’être* in the listening of God’s Word, in “the breaking of the bread”, in common prayer, in brotherly union and the testimony of charity. Its members are thus called to stay with Him (Mk 3:13) and, consequently, to announce and testify to the Gospel in the world.¹⁵

The primacy of spiritual life

The “heart” of religious life’s renewal is life in the Spirit, nourished at the sources of the Word of God and of the Liturgy.

2. This text of the *Acts* is an icon of religious life. The Church, recalls its main elements every time she exhorts consecrated people to undertake a journey of conversion and “going back to the Gospel,” pointing out the *primacy of*

¹³ Cf. *Principles and Norms for the Liturgy of the Hours*, 9.

¹⁴ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 1.

¹⁵ Cf. *Called to Stay with Him*, 39-45.

spiritual life as the heart of every form of renewal and charismatic rebirth.

It is the road that the Vatican Council II has pointed out with clarity and decisiveness. For this, it is worth that we reflect together on some fundamental texts: *“The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes”* ¹⁶ [...]. *They who make profession of the evangelical counsels should seek and love above all God who has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn. 4:10). In all the circumstances they should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3), which is the source and stimulus of love of the neighbor for the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. Even the very practice of the evangelical counsels is animated and governed by this charity. For this reason members of institutes should assiduously cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing on the authentic sources of Christian spirituality. In the first place let them have the Sacred Scripture at hand daily, so that they might learn “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:8), by reading and meditating on the divine scriptures. They should perform the sacred liturgy, especially the holy mystery of the Eucharist, with their hearts and their lips,*

¹⁶ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

according to the mind of the Church, and they should nourish their spiritual lives from this richest of sources.

Thus, refreshed at the table of the divine law and of the sacred altar, let them love the members of Christ as brothers, let them reverence and love their pastors in a filial spirit; let them more and more live and think with the Church, and let them dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to its mission.”¹⁷

To contemplate the face of Christ

Christ's face is the point of convergence of the consecrated ones' life, called to be witnesses of holiness.

3. The teaching of the Vatican Council II on the primacy of spiritual life has found further confirmation and specification in the Synod of the Bishops on Consecrated Life and the ensuing apostolic Exhortation (*Vita Consecrata*, 1996), which has underlined the Trinitarian, Christological and Pneumatological dimension of consecrated life. The guiding image of the Exhortation is the icon of the Transfiguration.¹⁸ Thus, the face of Christ is the point of convergence of every form of consecrated life and of each consecrated person.

¹⁷ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6.

¹⁸ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 14-16.

Precisely given the renewal of religious life, the apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life offers concrete indications to live the spiritual life's primacy.¹⁹

As intrinsic to the nature of consecrated life, it recalls the need to be nourished “*by the wellsprings of a sound and deep spirituality,*” since “*those who profess the evangelical counsels must aspire with all their strength to the perfection of charity.*” This commitment – the document explains - *is clearly evidenced in the many examples of holy founders and foundresses, and of so many consecrated persons who have borne faithful witness to Christ to the point of martyrdom. To tend towards holiness: this is in summary the program of every consecrated life, particularly in the perspective of its renewal on the threshold of the Third Millennium.*”²⁰

Practically, sanctity consists of being conformed to Christ, to whom we are totally consecrated. It means to assume the “form” of Christ progressively, not through an external imitation, but by letting the Holy Spirit “form” Christ’s body in us. And this may only happen if we are perpetually “enamored” with Him, taken by Him, who is “the fairest among the children of man.”

To pursue this journey of holiness centered on the living person of Christ, it is necessary to go back to the genuine sources of Christian *spirituality*: the Word of God, “*which*

¹⁹ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 93-95.

²⁰ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 93.

*is the first source of all Christian spirituality,”*²¹ and the Liturgy, “*indispensable means of effectively sustaining communion with Christ.*”²²

Called to stay with him

The Rogationists journey with the Church on the way of sanctity.

4. Aware of the demands of the Congregation and the Church’s journey, our 9th General Chapter has picked up and re-launched for us the teaching of the Church about the vocation to sanctity and about the primacy of spiritual life in its main document with the meaningful title “Called to stay with Him.” *“Together with the Church entering the new millennium, we want to commit ourselves to strengthen our faith and our witnessing, to awaken in us the true longing for sanctity, the strong desire for conversion and personal renewal in an evermore intense climate of prayer and of solidarity in welcoming our neighbor, especially the most needy. [...] As faithful interpreter of God’s plan, the Church invites us today to give priority to spiritual life in our programs of life and apostolate by drawing from the genuine sources of Christian spirituality which are: the*

²¹ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 94.

²² Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 95.

*Word of God and Liturgy, the founding charism and its consequent spiritual patrimony.”*²³

By going back to the teaching of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* and the capitular document amply develops the theme of the primacy of spiritual life and the essential role of God's Word and the Liturgy in such precedence, lived in the light of our original charismatic inspiration.²⁴

To restart afresh from Christ

To contemplate the face of Jesus Christ is the inheritance of the Jubilee. Prayer, especially the liturgical one is the privileged place for encountering the Lord.

5. In his Apostolic Letter “*Novo Millennium Ineunte*”, John Paul II synthesizes the inheritance of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 in the contemplation of the face of Christ: “*Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life's journey.*”²⁵ The Pope invites to restart afresh from Christ, “*who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity,*

²³ Called to stay with Him, 3.

²⁴ Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 47; *Called to Stay with Him*, 46-58; particularly n. 46.

²⁵ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 15

*and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem.”*²⁶ He affirms that “*all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.*”²⁷ As the fundamental steps for its itinerary, he indicates prayer,²⁸ the Eucharist,²⁹ the sacrament of the Reconciliation,³⁰ the primacy of grace³¹ as well as the Word of God listened and announced.³²

The Pope underlines, in particular way, the nature and importance of Christian prayer: “*Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: ‘Abide in me and I in you’ (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life, but also in personal experience, is the*

²⁶ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 29.

²⁷ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 30.

²⁸ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 32-34.

²⁹ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 35-36.

³⁰ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 37.

³¹ Novo Millennio Ineunte, 38.

³² Novo Millennio Ineunte, 39-41.

secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life.”³³

“[...] Christian communities must become genuine ‘schools’ of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly ‘falls in love’. Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan.”³⁴

This teaching is also the core of the recent Instruction *To Restart Afresh from Christ* which re-launches for us religious the great pastoral indications of John Paul II for the third millennium.³⁵

To pray according to the spirit of the Church

In the liturgical reform we live the spirit of the Vatican II.

³³ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 32.

³⁴ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 33.

³⁵ Cf. Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Restarting Afresh from Christ*, 23-26

6. As we have previously called to mind,³⁶ the Council recommends that the religious “*should perform the sacred liturgy, especially the holy mystery of the Eucharist, with their hearts and their lips, according to the mind of the Church, and they should nourish their spiritual lives from this richest of sources.*”³⁷

Liturgy, in fact, “*is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit*”³⁸, “*the great school of prayer of the Church.*”³⁹

The Vatican Council II received this commitment to animate the biblical and liturgical renewal. It then assumed it as its own, re-launching it the constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, with the clear intent “*to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful*”⁴⁰ and “*in order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy.*”⁴¹

³⁶ Cf. n. 2.

³⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 10.

⁴⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

*“The liturgical renewal - John Paul II writes - is the most visible fruit of the whole work of the Council.”*⁴² The Council has been a great event that changed the Church's face in our time more than any other. *“The renewal of the Liturgy, connected with the biblical renewal, with the ecumenical movement, with the missionary thrust, did contribute to the global renewal of the whole Church.”*⁴³

*“A very close and organic bond exists between the renewal of the liturgy and the renewal of the whole life of the Church. The Church does not only act but also expresses herself in the Liturgy, lives by the Liturgy and draws from the Liturgy the strength for her life. For this reason liturgical renewal carried out correctly in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council is, in a certain sense, the measure and the condition for putting into effect the teaching of that Council.”*⁴⁴

Liturgical prayer and renewal of the consecrated life

Sacred Scripture and Liturgy are the soul of the renewal of consecrated life.

7. Now, if it is true that the liturgical reform *is the measure and the condition to put the teaching of the Council into*

⁴² Vicesimus Quintus Annus, 12.

⁴³ Vicesimus Quintus Annus, 4.

⁴⁴ Dominicae Cenae, 13.

effect, it is also true that the renewal of religious life passes through the full acquisition of the spirit of the ecclesial prayer. Several important Church documents noticed and expressly affirmed this. The *Fraternal Life in Community*⁴⁵ affirms that “one of the most valuable achievements of recent decades, recognized and blessed by all, has been the rediscovery of liturgical prayer by religious families.

Communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, or at least of some parts of it, has revitalized prayer in many communities, which have been brought into more lively contact with the Word of God and the prayer of the Church.

Thus, all must remain strongly convinced that community is built up starting from the liturgy, especially from celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments. Among these other sacraments, renewed attention should be given to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through which the Lord restores union with Himself and with one's brothers and sisters. As happened in the first community in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:42), the Word, the Eucharist, common prayer, dedication and fidelity to the teaching of the Apostles and their successors, put one in touch with God's great works; in this context, these works become resplendent and generate praise, thanksgiving, joy, union of

⁴⁵ Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, February 2, 1994.

hearts, comfort in the shared difficulties of daily life together, and mutual encouragement in faith.”⁴⁶

The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the IX Synod of the Bishops on Consecrated Life offers this observation: *“In tune with the liturgical renewal of the Church in the last decades, in all the states of life the participation to the Eucharist, to the celebration of the liturgy of the hours and to the sacraments has been fostered. The very rites of the religious profession have been renewed [...]. The forms of piety have been progressively updated and greater importance is given to contemplative prayer; this assumes today, in many occasions, the form of a prayer shared also with the laymen, for a mutual growth in the experience of God and in the mutual edification.*

[...] In answer to the Council, the Word of God, better known, read and meditated, is found again in the hands and in the heart of the consecrated people today, under form of Lectio Divina [...]. The fundamental value of the biblical renewal is discovered. In the light of the Word a rediscovery and actualization of the charism has been realized, a better evaluation of the spirituality of the consecrated life, a greater awareness of the centrality of the ‘sequela’ so as to be disciples and apostles of Christ.

⁴⁶ Fraternal Life in Community, 14.

The awareness of the baptismal consecration as the root of the self giving to God through the evangelical vows have brought to perceive the ecclesiality of consecrated life and its vocation and mission, with a renewed sense of communion with the other members of the people of God, bishops, priests, deacons, lay people.”⁴⁷

In the footsteps of Father Hannibal

Father Hannibal's spirit of prayer was nourished at the sources of the Scripture and of the Liturgy.

8. We have recently concluded the year dedicated to Father Hannibal to commemorate the 150th anniversary of his birth. The celebration, as I wrote in the special letter of preparation,⁴⁸ intended to reflect on the Father's testimony of holiness and, in line with the primacy of spiritual life, a further call to commitment to holiness, as our fundamental vocation, *in the footsteps of our Father Founder*.⁴⁹ With courage and consequentiality we must now gather and live the fruits of the celebrations, activities, and studies undertaken on the theme of the Father's sanctity.

⁴⁷ IX Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris* (1994), 22.

⁴⁸ *In the footsteps of Father Hannibal*. Circular Letter for the 150th Anniversary of Blessed Hannibal's Birth, Rome 2000.

⁴⁹ *In the Footsteps of Father Hannibal*, 3.

Father Hannibal's "spirit of prayer" emerges among the most precious teachings coming to us from his life of holiness, which brought him to fall in love with Jesus and to contemplate his face in the most needy neighbor.⁵⁰ The Founder's testimonies of prayer certainly manifest various sources and expressions, due to his wide religious culture, his personal piety, his creativity, and pedagogical wisdom.

There are also secondary and contingent elements, referable to his time's particular devotional culture, to the theology and the contemporary liturgical praxis. However, there is no doubt that the Scriptures and the Liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist were primary sources of the Father's prayer, as I have had the opportunity to mention in the above-quoted circular letter.⁵¹

Our Father searched and beheld *the face of the beloved of his heart* in the words of the Sacred Scripture he continually studied and meditated. In the holy Liturgy, he united himself with loving affection to his Lord. From these inexhaustible sources of grace, he drew light and vigor for his exemplary journey of holiness.

He continually nourished the charism of the Rogate at the source of the Church's prayer. The same charism impelled him, with increasing fervor and zeal, to live and spread the prayer for good workers in the Church and love the

⁵⁰ Cf. *With the Church in the New Millennium*, 8.

⁵¹ *In the footsteps of Father Hannibal*, 23-24.

neighbors, especially the poorest, up to the total gift of his own life.

So as to live the Charism

The biblical and liturgical dimension of our prayer is a demand of the charism of the Rogate.

9. The Founder's example and teaching have led us to fully welcome the Church's spirit of prayer based on God's Word and the Liturgy, and to nourish our charismatic spirituality at these sources. However, it is the charism of the Rogate itself, which by its nature, requires the reference to the biblical and liturgical spirituality.

Our charism, in fact, according to our Constitutions, is “*the understanding of and the zeal for the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: "Mensis quidem multa, operari autem pauci. Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam"*”.⁵²

It is necessary to read the Lord's words in the context of the whole Scripture, their natural place, to understand their meaning and consequences continually, and actualize their content. Better yet, through God's Word celebrated in the Liturgy and incarnated in the Church's life, the Spirit reveals their sense to us today.

⁵² *Constitutions*, 4.

Furthermore, our charism, in its prayerful dimension, finds its best expression exactly in the liturgical prayer,⁵³ which is Christ's and the Church's prayer. Thus, it is the "effective" prayer, because it is addressed by the Church to the Father through the Spirit in Jesus' name (Cf Jn 14:13-14). In the Liturgy it is Christ himself, united to his beloved Bride, who implores from the Father the gift of the workers of the Gospel. Finally, the liturgical prayer, by its nature demanding the offering of our lives to God, brings us to understand and live in a better way the sense of our "consecration" through the fourth vow. It implies not only the offering of "prayers" to the Lord for good workers, but the gift of ourselves as well, of all that we are and we do, as workers in the Lord's field.

God's Word celebrated and lived is the source of the word of the Rogate, and the life of the Church is its maternal womb. Father Hannibal understood this well as demonstrated by what he wrote in the 20th of his *Forty Declarations and Promises*:

"If as a priest, I have understood till now the obligation and duty of special attention, devotion and recollection in the recitation of the Divine Office and in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, now that I belong to a Pious Institute which aims, in a particular manner, at the increase of the Catholic Priesthood, with the Lord's grace, I propose to redouble my attention, devotion, fervor, and recollection in

⁵³ Cf. Rogationist Formation; Ratio Institutionis, 285; Capitular Documents (1992), 311.

the recitation of the Holy Divine Office and in the celebration of the Holy Mass and other liturgical or sacred services. With regard to the Divine Office, I will recite it slowly, with a devout heart, savoring the sublimity of the divine teachings, prayers, and readings. [...] In the recitation of the Divine Office, I will place the intention of honoring the Saint of the day, of obtaining many zealous workers for the Church and divine mercies for our Institute; of praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, the conversion of sinners, and for the interests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

The steps to accomplish

The biblical and liturgical renewal received into our documents

10. Our Congregation, aware and sensitive to the journey of the Church, has progressively welcomed the biblical and liturgical renewal promoted by the Vatican Council II by assimilating its spirit of ecclesial prayer without neglecting the constitutive elements of our charismatic spirituality.

Worth noticeable is the effort pursued until now to conjugate and to integrate the biblical and liturgical renewal with the demands of the spirit of our Institute.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 47.

The documents of the ordinary and special IV General Chapter, celebrated immediately after the Vatican II (1968), and of the General Chapter (1980) deserve a particular reference. The teachings of these two Chapters on the biblical and liturgical renewal, on the Rogationist spirituality and prayer constitute a patrimony of doctrinal wisdom and a fundamental spiritual literature for our prayer life.⁵⁵ Also the following Chapters have given their precious contribution by discussing expressly about the Word of God and the Liturgy.⁵⁶ The renewed Constitutions and Norms have received the capitular orientations and translated them in principles and rules of life for our communities, and for the individual religious;⁵⁷ the *Ratio Institutionis* has provided their insertion in the various steps of the Rogationist formation.⁵⁸ Following the biblical and liturgical renewal wanted by the Council and promoted by the General Chapters, the book of the Rogationist prayer also underwent updating, in different steps. The last edition,

⁵⁵ Cf. IV General Chapter, *Declarations and Decrees*: 493-590; VI General Chapter, *Capitular Documents*: 367. 130-225.

⁵⁶ Cf. VII General Chapter, Rogationist Communion and Community (1986); VIII General Chapter, *Capitular Documents* (1992); IX General Chapter, *Called to stay with Him, primacy of spiritual life*, (1998).

⁵⁷ Cf. *Constitutions*, 89-107; *Norms*, 86-106.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Rogationist Formation, Ratio Institutionis*, 27- 33. 48. 56. 109 -110. 117. 122. 142. 150 - 174. 215-231. 233. 250. 266. 275. 285. 302. 3020. 333. 338. 344. 353. 385. 386a. 397.401. 494. 495. 496. 452. 502. 506. 509. 523-27. 532. 534. 574; cf *Rekindle the Gift of God which is in you, Project for the Rogationist permanent formation*, 53.

Rogationists at Prayer, represents the most complete effort done until now “to pray according to the spirit of the Church” in fidelity to our own charism.

A noticeable contribution to the biblical and liturgical inculturation of the Rogationist prayer is offered by the publication of the *Rogationist Psalter*,⁵⁹ in which the prayer of the Psalms is proposed in a Rogationist key, by introducing each psalm with a particular “*sentence*”, taken from the Writings of the Founder, and concluding it with a vocational prayer. In the same way, the four historical-theological–pastoral studies introducing the main *Rogationist feasts* are worth mentioning.⁶⁰

Biblical liturgical renewal now needs to be continually deepened and lived

11. At this point it becomes spontaneous to ask ourselves: after the whole journey is accomplished, what else is to be done? Following the solicitations of the Church,⁶¹ it may be worth for the meantime to question ourselves: Up to what measure have we accommodated the Vatican II’s spirit of the biblical and liturgical renewal in the praxis of our personal and community prayer? And up to what point have

⁵⁹ *Pray the Lord of the Harvest. Rogationist Psalter*, Rome 1991.

⁶⁰ 1. Festa del Nome di Gesù; 2. La devozione al Sacro Cuore; 3. Festa del 1° Luglio; 4. Nostra Signora della Rogazione Evangelica - B. Vergine Maria De “la Salette” Madre di misericordia. Roma, 1999.

⁶¹ Cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 36; *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 57.

we assimilated the orientations of our General Chapters and Rules on spiritual life and on the Rogationist prayer? ⁶² The 9th General Chapter however, in analyzing the situation of the liturgical life, suggested the theological deepening of the liturgical spirituality and the improvement of the community celebrations.⁶³ It is precisely in this sense that we now have to address our commitment. The recommendations of John Paul II for the Church are also valid for us, when he said that “*while the reform of the Liturgy desired by the Second Vatican Council, can be considered already in progress, the pastoral promotion of the Liturgy constitutes a permanent commitment to draw ever more abundantly from the riches of the Liturgy, that vital force, which spreads from Christ to the members of his Body, which is the Church*” ⁶⁴; and that “*the most urgent task is that of the biblical and liturgical formation.*”⁶⁵

I believe that in order to fall ever more in love with the Word of God and the Liturgy, we need to point out and to pursue, at the various levels of responsibility, a suitable biblical and liturgical formative itineraries, keeping in mind the different cultural contexts. It is also fitting to continue the effort to integrate always in a better way our charismatic

⁶² Cf. *With the Church into the new millennium. To live the Jubilee in the spirit of the Rogate*, 15.

⁶³ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 13.

⁶⁴ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 10. 68

⁶⁵ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 15.

spirit with the appeals of the prayer of the Church in our personal and community prayer.

In this sense it will be good to continue to favor and encourage the confreres in the study of Sacred Scripture, Liturgy and Rogationist spirituality, so that they may help us to discover and live the richness of the Rogationist prayer.

Suggestions for reflection, revision of life and planning

Consecrated life today needs a spiritual rebirth, which will help to bring about concretely the spiritual and evangelical meaning of baptismal consecration and its new and special consecration.

(Restarting afresh from Christ, 20)

1. Is the primacy of spiritual life truly felt in the community?
2. What is the impact of the Chapter's document *Called to Stay with Him* in the planning of the community life and apostolate?
3. How much space is given to the deepening of the spirit of the Founder and of the Institute in our ordinary spiritual formation?

4. Up to what extent did we assimilate the indications of the General Chapters and of our laws on spiritual life and Rogationist prayer?

PART 2

SACRED SCRIPTURE AND LITURGY

*“He interpreted for them every
passage of Scripture which referred to
him” (Lk. 24:27)*

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

In the Liturgy Christ speaks to us and gives himself to us.

12. The account of the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus has a strong catechetical and liturgical value. It evokes the process of the Christian initiation, which starts with the explanation of the Scriptures and culminates with the admission of the neophytes to the Eucharistic banquet. At the same time we can see in this, if not truly the scheme of a celebration, at least a guiding line. The proclamation and the listening of the Scripture flow into the action of thanksgiving and in the

Eucharistic communion, which are moments with equal as depth. *“In its suggestive vivacity, the episode of the two disciples of Emmaus is an exemplary image of the encounter that the Church has in the Eucharist with her Lord. The experience of the two becomes our experience. [...] Christ walks on the roads of man. With his Word he summons and shows the sense of life. The broken bread is nourishment and revelation. The meeting with Christ fills the heart with hope and gives the courage to announce Him living in the world.”*⁶⁶

The text of Luke well emphasizes the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (and in every liturgical celebration) and the inseparable bond between Word and Liturgy.

Sacred Scripture and Liturgy

The Word of God is fully revealed in the liturgical celebration.

13. *“The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures, as she venerated the Body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the sacred Liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ.”*⁶⁷

The Liturgy springs from the Sacred Scripture as its source and as it were, its crib. Thus it is all permeated by the Word

⁶⁶ Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Eucaristia, Comunione e Comunità*, 5-6.

⁶⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 21.

of God.⁶⁸ The liturgical reform, in fact, wanted also to restore “*a more ample, more varied and more suitable reading from sacred Scripture.*”⁶⁹

*“Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the Liturgy”*⁷⁰, and it is especially in the Liturgy that Sacred Scripture reveals its reference to Christ, actualizes the salvation and it is manifested as Word of God⁷¹, the God who “comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them.”⁷² “For in the Liturgy, God speaks to his people and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel; and the people reply to God both by songs and prayer”.⁷³ The Word celebrated in the Liturgy demands a personal attitude of respect, adoring attention, prayer, searching and listening to what God tells us today through the pages of the

⁶⁸ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 24; Dei Verbum, 25.

⁶⁹ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 35.

⁷⁰ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 24.

⁷¹ “The Word of God announces the history of salvation and the Eucharistic celebration, by celebrating the Word, actualizes the mystery of salvation contained and transmitted by the Word. The historical-salvific phases reminded by the Word of God are actualized in the Liturgy. Truly each celebration becomes ‘memory’ of the history of salvation in such a way that the Word of God in the peculiarity of the different celebrations, becomes actualized mystery of salvation.” (A. Triacca, *New Dictionary of Liturgy*, 2001, pp. 262.266-267).

⁷² Dei Verbum, 21.

⁷³ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 33.

Scripture. A loving and tender knowledge of the Sacred Scripture, produced by its study and its daily deepening in personal prayer, is essential in order to gather in fullness the abundant fruits of grace, which derive from listening to the celebrated Word and from the liturgical celebrations putting us in communion with the Lord.

To know the Scripture

The Word of God, source and soul of the spiritual life, is to be loved, known, prayed

14. Since “*such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor, and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life*”,⁷⁴ the Council exhorts especially that priests “*should immerse themselves in the Sacred Scriptures by constant sacred reading and diligent study*”.⁷⁵ Vatican II invites above all the religious to approach “*the sacred text, whether in the sacred liturgy, which is full of the divine words, or in devout reading, or in such suitable exercises and various other helps*”.⁷⁶ Finally it reminds us that “*prayer should accompany the reading of the sacred Scripture*”.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Dei Verbum, 21.

⁷⁵ Dei Verbum, 25.

⁷⁶ Dei Verbum, 25.

⁷⁷ Dei Verbum, 25.

Solicited also by the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, which assumes as its own the teaching of the Council, and presents Word of God as “*the first source of all Christian spirituality*,”⁷⁸ we have to put all the needed commitment, both on the personal as well as community level, to continually grow in the knowledge of the sacred Scripture. Its study has to accompany our whole itinerary of formation, because “*ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ*.”⁷⁹ We cannot “*ignore*” Christ, called as we are to conform our life to him through the profession of the evangelical counsels and to announce him to the others.

In order to know Christ we have to fall in love with his Word, following the example of our Founder who “*assiduously frequented*” the Scripture. In our daily relating with the Word of God we learn to stay and to remain with Jesus (Cf Mk 3:14; Jn 14:23-24; 15:1-7).

Besides accurate study, the Church recommends the *Lectio divina*,⁸⁰ an ancient and ever new method to approach to the Scripture,⁸¹ to listen to the Word (*lectio*), to ruminate it (*meditatio*), to transform it into prayer (*oratio*), up to centering our tension on Jesus who is the ultimate sense of the Scripture (*contemplatio*). Thus we will arrive, almost

⁷⁸ Cf. n. 94.

⁷⁹ St. Jerome, Comm. In Is., Prol.: PL 24,17.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 94.

⁸¹ Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39.

spontaneously, to see the world of today with the eyes of God, to think, and consequently to speak and to act, with “*the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 2:5). If we are well founded in our knowledge of the Scripture, we will become more attentive to the Word of God, which we listen to daily in the personal and community prayer. We will learn to accept and to welcome its continuous provocation for our conversion and spiritual growth.⁸²

For a long time, our documents exhort to a vital encounter with the Word of God through the “*lectio divina*,”⁸³ “*which draws from the biblical text the living word, which questions, directs and shapes our lives.*”⁸⁴ The reality is that in our personal and community life the *Lectio* is not very much known and practiced, it does not belong to our culture yet. We need to educate ourselves on this, not only through personal commitment but also through suitable community formative itineraries, starting from the initial formation. It is essential that the sacred Scripture, as the supreme rule of our faith,⁸⁵ the foundation of our vocation⁸⁶ and source of

⁸² Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 71.

⁸³ Cf. *Rogationist Formation, Ratio institutionis*, 28; *Called to Stay with Him*, 61-62; *Norms*, 98.

⁸⁴ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39.

⁸⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 1.

the spiritual life,⁸⁷ becomes the book of our daily meditation⁸⁸ according to the testimony and the teaching of the Founder.⁸⁹ The formative programs have to translate this demand in concrete, through forms of real initiation to the prayerful knowledge of the Word of God.

I am convinced that the Word of God, loved, deepened, meditated and prayed, has the power to change our personal and community life. In fact, more than any other word, it solicits our journey of conversion, sustains our growth in Christ, educates, animates and gives substance to the personal prayer, fosters fraternal life, leads us to love the Church, helps us to understand and to live the wealth of our charism in these times, thrusts us to evangelization.

If we are personally imbued and internally transformed by the Word of God, we do really “experience” Him, strengthen fraternal communion and become capable of witnessing the love of God in the world.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Cf. *Constitutions*, 102.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Forty Declarations and Promises*, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI.

⁸⁹ *Called to stay with Him*, 61.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Dei Verbum*, 21.

Living the Liturgy

Christian spirituality is a liturgical spirituality, the basis and foundation of the life of the Church.

15. Liturgy is life and therefore it is always a means for the transformation of man and the continuous growth in the communion with God and with his brothers. If the Word of God is the first source of all Christian spirituality, it is also true that this Word, made man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is accomplished for us in the liturgical celebration today. *“From the Liturgy - the Vatican Council II affirms – and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ, and the glorification of God to which all the other activities of the Church are directed, as towards their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness.”*⁹¹

Christian life finds in the Liturgy its source, its norm and its apex. If spirituality or life in the Spirit, in fact, is a life based on communion with God through our incorporation and continuous conformation-assimilation to Christ through the Holy Spirit, is clear that it finds in the Liturgy much more than a model. The Liturgy, as St. Pius X used to say, is *“essential source of the true Christian spirit.”*⁹² Pius XII defined the Liturgy as *“the exercise of the priesthood of the*

⁹¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

⁹² Cf. St. Pius X, *Motu proprio Tra le Sollecitudini*.

total Christ, Head and members.”⁹³ Paul VI considered it as “*the first school of our spiritual life.*”⁹⁴ The Vatican Council II presents the Liturgy as “*the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which her power flows*”⁹⁵; and it states that “*it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.*”⁹⁶

We can say then that the Christian spirituality is a liturgical spirituality⁹⁷ and that the Liturgy, as unifying element of the spiritual experience of the believer, is the fundamental and essential spirituality of the Church, the base of every model or school of spiritual life.

The Easter Mystery center and heart of the Liturgy

16. The value and the bearing of these statements can be well understood only if we overcome some wrong or

⁹³ Cf. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 29.

⁹⁴ Paul VI, Discourse at the close of the second period of the Vatican Council II (December 4, 1963).

⁹⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

⁹⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

⁹⁷ “In reality the liturgical spirituality can be defined as a style of Christian life based on the assimilation and identification with Christ operated by Baptism and Confirmation and continuously nourished by the full participation in the Eucharist, in the sacraments and in the prayer of the Church. All in the fundamental environment of the Liturgical Year” (J. L. Martin, “In spirito e verità”. *Introduzione alla Liturgia*, p. 464).

reductive visions of the Liturgy, previous to the biblical and liturgical renewal of the Vatican II, tending to consider it rather in rubrical and juridical way, as the external form and organization of the worship and the complex of ceremonies regulated by the Hierarchy.

The Liturgy is truly something else. In the Liturgy, as the Council teaches, the Church celebrates mainly the Easter Mystery through which Christ has completed the work of our salvation.⁹⁸

“The entire liturgical life moves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the other Sacraments, from where we draw the living sources of salvation (cf. Is 12.3).” [...] Since the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection constitute the content of the daily life of the Church and the pledge of its eternal Easter, - John Paul II explains – the first task of the Liturgy is to bring us back untiringly on the Easter journey opened by Christ, where we accept to die in order to enter life.”⁹⁹ [...] ‘In order to actualize his Easter mystery, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the liturgical actions. The Liturgy is, therefore, the privileged “place” of the Christians’ encounter with God and with Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 17,3).’¹⁰⁰ The Council, in fact, affirms that “every liturgical

⁹⁸ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 5-7.

⁹⁹ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 7; Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

*celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, it is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.”*¹⁰¹

The Liturgy, especially in the Eucharistic synaxis, “*the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel,*”¹⁰² manifests and builds up the Church. It manifests the Church because it shows her true face, *which is the Church at prayer [...] which is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic [...]. Thus, it is especially in the Liturgy that the mystery of the Church is announced, enjoyed and lived.*”¹⁰³ It builds up the Church because, “*in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of believers who form one body in Christ (cf. 1Cor. 10:17) is both expressed and brought about.*”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7.

¹⁰² Cf. Presbyterorum Ordinis, 5.

¹⁰³ Vicesimus Quintus Annus, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Lumen Gentium, 3.

The liturgical prayer source and end of the Christian prayer: law and model for every form of prayer

17. “Liturgy – John Paul II affirms – is the great school of prayer of the Church.”¹⁰⁵ The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “the liturgy is also a participation in Christ's own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the Liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.”¹⁰⁶

“The liturgical prayer, as a typical form of the ecclesial prayer, does not exhaust all the possibilities of prayer of the Church and of the Christian. Yet, the notion of Christian prayer is applicable to the Liturgy in its most genuine sense; on it all the other forms and formulas of the dialogue with God, through Christ and in the Spirit have to model in order to be authentic. [...] The liturgical prayer with its biblical inspiration, theological dimensions (Trinitarian - Christological, community - ecclesial, anthropological), specific attitudes, and proper formulas is symbolic for any Christian prayer, personal and communitarian. Taking the Eucharist as the ultimate term of comparison, we affirm with Von Allmen: ‘It is in the measure in which prayers are congenial with the Eucharist, that they are specifically Christian.’ Any manifestation of prayer has not only to spring from the liturgical prayer as from its source and tend

¹⁰⁵ Vigésimus Quintus Annus, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1073.

*to it as to its summit, but it has also to model on the liturgy as school of prayer for the people of God. That is why all manifestations of prayer – from the mental to the devotional - to be authentic, have to begin with the proclamation of and the listening to the Word and have to express themselves as praise, thanks, invocation and petition of the Spirit, oblation, intercession, commitment to communion with Christ and his mystery.”*¹⁰⁷

Spiritual life has its source in the Liturgy but it is not exhausted by it.

18. *“Spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with others, - the Council teaches – but he must also enter into his bedroom to pray to his Father in secret (cf Mt 6:6); furthermore, according to the teaching of the apostle, he must pray without ceasing (cf. Th. 5:17).”*¹⁰⁸ The spiritual experience that draws its vital sap from the Liturgy must, in fact, go beyond the threshold of the celebration to become contemplation and action. On the other hand, if the Liturgy is the source of the spirituality and of the Christian prayer, it is indeed true that there may not be a fruitful participation in the liturgical celebrations without a journey of authentic conversion, without the continuous search for union with

¹⁰⁷ Castellano, J., "Prayer and Liturgy," in *New Dictionary of Spirituality*, 2001, p. 1494. 1505-1506.

¹⁰⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 12.

God in all the moments of life, without the personal assimilation of the Word of God, the liturgical actions and the “mysteries” celebrated. Thus, the Church insists also, on the necessity of the biblical and liturgical education to promote an active and fruitful sharing in the celebration of the salvific mystery of Christ.¹⁰⁹

Easter Mystery as the paradigm of Christian existence

19. Liturgical spirituality does not make reference only to the celebratory moment. It extends to the whole life. It interprets the authentic Christian existence starting from the Easter Mystery. It directs Christian existence to this same mystery, in such way that it influences qualitatively and concretely in the process of our progressive conformation to Christ. Liturgical spirituality roots us in Christ and in the Church. It educates us to the true Christian prayer. It grants certainty and objectivity to our spiritual journey, because the Liturgy, founded on the sacred Scripture and on living tradition of the Church, is proclamation of faith: *“The law of prayer is the law of faith, - teaches the Catechism - the Church believes as it prays. The Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living tradition.”*¹¹⁰

The Liturgy celebrates the Easter Mystery of Christ in many ways and on different levels: in the Eucharist, in the liturgy of the Hours, in the celebrations of the Word, in the Sacraments. Celebrations are then developed according to

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

¹¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1124.

chronological rhythms that embrace the day, the week and the whole year,¹¹¹ in the “memorial” framework of the Liturgical Year. *“In the rhythms and in the events of time we remember and thus we live the mysteries of salvation. Center of the whole liturgical year is the Triduum of the Lord crucified, buried and risen, which culminates on the Easter Sunday. Every Sunday, the Easter of the week, the holy Church makes present this great event in which Christ has won sin and death. From Easter spring all holy days: Ashes, the beginning of the Lent, the Lord's Ascension, the Pentecost, the first Sunday of Advent. Also in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, of the Apostles, of the saints and in the commemoration of the faithful departed, the pilgrim Church on the earth proclaims the Easter of his Lord”*.¹¹²

Our life is thus entirely enfolded, permeated and vivified by the salvific mystery of Christ.

The Lectionary: “Lectio Divina” of the Church

Lectionary should be known in order to live the Word of God

20. *“The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that a richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s Word. In this way a more*

¹¹¹ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 102.

¹¹² Roman Missal, Announcement of the Easter Day; cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 102-105.

*representative part of the Sacred Scripture will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years.”*¹¹³

This disposition of the Vatican II found its implementation in the publication of the *Lectionary*,¹¹⁴ the book of the Word of God arranged for its proclamation, celebration so as to become “*vivifying Spirit*.” The Church reads the sacred Scripture mainly as biblical *Lectionary*. The *Lectionary* is the “normal,” “authentic,” and “continuous” reading of the Bible done by the Church. It is almost like a *lectio divina*, which, through the daily, constant, loving practice of the contents orderly offered by the *Lectionary* produces a daily assimilation of the Word of God that favors in us the sanctifying action of the divine grace, vivifies our being and directs our actions.

The *Lectionary*, proclaimed day after day, Sunday after Sunday, is the best open catechism, that continually feeds our faith and helps us to deepen it. Then, since it is arranged according to the liturgical times, it helps us to understand the Mystery of Christ celebrated during the whole liturgical year and to conform our life to Him.

¹¹³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 51.

¹¹⁴ There are several *Lectionaries*, besides that of the Mass: for the Sacraments and Rites, for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, for the Office of the Readings.

The knowledge of the structure and of the theology of the *Lectionary*, therefore, represents the best way to understand and to live the spirit of the Liturgy; while the daily deepening in prayer of its contents opens to us those “treasures of the Bible” announced and realized for us by God's Word celebrated in the Liturgy.

The Homily

Breaking the bread of the Word through the homily is integral part of the celebration.

21. The homily is the moment of the existential actualization of the Word celebrated in the Liturgy. Therefore, it is an important moment, which is never to be neglected or underestimated. I wish here to call again our attention on the importance of the homily as a constitutive part of the celebration, by developing some considerations on its nature and modalities, beginning with the teaching of the Council in the Constitution on the Liturgy: “*By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year. The homily, therefore, is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself*”.¹¹⁵

The documents of the Magisterium insist on the fact that the homily is part of the liturgical action; more precisely, part

¹¹⁵ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 52.

of the Liturgy of the Word.¹¹⁶ This means that it belongs to the logic of the celebration of the Word and from this it has to draw its contents and modalities. *“The sermon, moreover, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources. Its character should be that of a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, that is, the mystery of Christ, which is ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the Liturgy.”*¹¹⁷ The specific character of the homily, in fact, is not so much explanatory, but mostly *mystagogic*, in the sense that it tends to “*let us enter inside*” the mystery of Christ which is announced and celebrated. The one presiding, through the homily, guides the faithful “*to an effective knowledge of Scripture. He opens their minds to thanksgiving for the wonderful works of God. He strengthens the faith of those present regarding the Word that in the celebration becomes sacrament through the Holy Spirit. Finally he prepares them for a fruitful reception of Communion and invites them to take upon themselves the demands of the Christian life.*”¹¹⁸

The homily must be prepared through study and prayer (*lectio divina*). There are essential tools for a correct sorting out and appropriateness of the themes proposed every time

¹¹⁶ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 35; General Introduction to the Roman Missal, 4. 41; Introduction to the Lectionary, 24.

¹¹⁷ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 35.

¹¹⁸ Introduction to the Lectionary, 41.

by the Word of God: the *Lectionary*, the *Missal* and the *Liturgy of the Hours*. The first one, with its “titles” that introduce the readings, together with the refrain of the responsorial psalm; the second with its different eucological formulas (prayers, prefaces). Finally, the Liturgy of the Hours, through its various elements, offers a further development and extension of the themes of the Eucharist.¹¹⁹

As Rogationists, during the homily, we should never neglect a suitable reference to our spirituality, especially when the Word of God expressly offers the occasion. I also wish to remember that, if the homily is obligatory “*in Sunday masses and holidays of obligation with the people assisting,*”¹²⁰ it is also recommended in weekdays, especially during the season of Advent and Lent.¹²¹

Let our Communities, in some particular circumstances (Advent and Lent, monthly recollection, feasts of the Congregation, community celebrations) experience the sharing of the Word, through the homily. Superiors, because of their office, are called to break the bread of the Word on the table of the community.

¹¹⁹ Cf. SODI M., “Liturgical Year,” in *Homiletical Dictionary*, Bergamo, pp. 51-66.

¹²⁰ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 52.

¹²¹ Cf. *Introduction to the Lectionary*, 24-27.

Liturgy and “pious exercises”

The primacy of the Liturgy and its harmonization with the “pious exercises”

22. The capitular document, “*Called to stay with Him*”, concludes with a part devoted to the Word of God and Liturgy¹²² stating that “*a contribution to spiritual growth comes also from the practices of piety, unique to our tradition, when inspired by the Liturgy. They should derive in some way from it and be led into it.*”¹²³ These words of the document are a textual quotation of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which expressly deals with the relationship between Liturgy and pious exercises.¹²⁴ On this matter the *Congregation on Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments* has recently intervened with the publication of the “*Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy.*” It is an ample text, which offers indications about the principles and practical orientations on the relationship between liturgy and popular piety. It mostly confirms and specifies the teaching of the Council about the value of the popular piety and its harmonization with the Liturgy;¹²⁵ the indisputable primacy of the Liturgy and subordination to it of the pious

¹²² *Called to stay with Him*, 47-49.

¹²³ *Called to stay with Him*, 49.

¹²⁴ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 13.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Directory on popular piety and liturgy*, 50-59. 129.

exercises;¹²⁶ the priority of the Liturgical Year over every other expression and devotional practice.¹²⁷ The Directory is addressed, besides the bishops, to the major religious superiors “*since many forms of popular piety arose within and were developed in the ambit of consecrated life and because the religious and the members of the secular institutes can contribute much to the desired proper harmonization of the various forms of popular piety with the Liturgy*”.¹²⁸

The Directory constitutes a valid instrument of formation and pastoral updating also for us.¹²⁹ In particular, it gives us the criteria for the correct evaluation of popular piety and pious exercises as elements of growth in the life of the Spirit, and for their correct harmonization with the Liturgy.

Word, Liturgy and Life

The Liturgy animates life and life becomes Liturgy as an offering pleasing to God.

23. The Word announces and communicates salvation, the liturgical celebration actualizes it, life has to manifest it and

¹²⁶ Cf. *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy*, 73-75.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy*, 94.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy*, 5.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Directory on Popular Piety e Liturgy*, 59.

to witness it.¹³⁰ We are called in fact to be visible sign of the new reality of the Kingdom by living in full communion with the Lord in the sacrifice of praise and in the service of brothers.¹³¹

Christian worship is decidedly “existential”, in the sense that it invests, involves and animates all our existence. Through his death on the cross, expression of his total donation to the Father for the salvation of men, Jesus Christ inaugurates the new worship, which is celebrated on the altar of one’s heart and life. The rituality of the Liturgy makes always memory of the offering of Christ to the Father; to this offering He associates that of our life.

Liturgy and life therefore is an inseparable binomial: the mystery celebrated in the Liturgy has to permeate life and life has to enter into the Liturgy. Still better, it has to become worship, which means an offering pleasing to God, as Paul, the apostle, often remembers: *“I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Rm 12:1); “And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3, 17)*. The words of the apostle express well the true sense of the Christian worship, never thought and thinkable as a moment separated from life. The Scripture stigmatizes with

¹³⁰ Cf. Lumen Gentium, 10-11.

¹³¹ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10.

words of fire the external and formal worship: *“When you come in to visit me, - proclamation of the prophet Isaiah - who asks these things of you? Trample my courts no more! Bring no more worthless offerings; your incense is loathsome to me. New moon and Sabbath, calling of assemblies octaves with wickedness: these I cannot bear. [...] learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow.”* (Is 1:12-13. 17; cf. Mt 9:13; 12, 7); Jesus himself teaches that it is necessary first to be reconciled with one’s own brother before presenting one’s offer to the altar (cf. Mt 5:23-24).

Every celebration is always an encounter with the risen Lord and communication of his Spirit who compels to love and to serve our neighbor.

It is the case to ask ourselves, then, what is the quality of our community prayer and what incidence do liturgical celebrations bear on our life, on our brotherly relationships in community, on the relationships with our neighbor and on the accomplishment of our apostolic task. In fact if we don't grow in mutual love and in apostolic zeal, it means that our celebrations expose their disunity from life and the risk that they may become expressions of a formal worship.

Liturgy and Inculturation

The principles and criteria for the inculturation of Liturgy are valid also for the inculturation of the Rogationist prayer

24. The Vatican Council II has promoted the inculturation of Liturgy and has pointed out some “*norms for adaptation to the traditions and culture of individual peoples*”¹³². John Paul II considers commitment to inculturation of the Liturgy as an important task to favor the harmonization of the different cultural values with the Christian Liturgy¹³³. In 1994 the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has published the directives on *Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*. It is a reflection that makes clearer the teaching of the Council and gives concrete directives on the matter. With the term “inculturation” it designates the process through which Liturgy and culture are mutually enriched in a dynamic way: the Liturgy evangelizes and makes fruitful cultures, and in turn it is enriched by them, so as to express and to celebrate the mystery of Christ embodied in the mentality of a people¹³⁴.

Deepening the inculturation of the Liturgy goes beyond the finality of this letter; I just wanted to point out the theme in order to solicit its study in the proper environments of the different steps of formation. What is interesting in this context is to underline the importance of the inculturation of the Rogationist prayer. It is this, in fact, a commitment that directly concerns us, both because as Congregation we

¹³² Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37-40.

¹³³ Cf. John Paul II, *Vigésimo Quinto Anno* (1988), 16.

¹³⁴ Cf. ALDAZABAL J., *Dizionario sintetico di Liturgia*, pp. 206-208. 138 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 17.

express by now a multicultural reality, as well as because our charism finds in the various expressions of our prayer life the best way to be incarnated in each culture and to assimilate the values which enrich and revitalize it. The principles and general criteria that the Church points out for the inculturation of the Liturgy can opportunely be also assumed for the inculturation of the Rogationist prayer.

The Task of Formation

Formation is needed to understand and to live the spirit of the Liturgy

25. Biblical and liturgical formation assumes remarkable importance for the proposed renewal to succeed. *“In seminaries and houses of religious, - the Council insists - clerics shall be given a liturgical formation in their spiritual life. For this they will need proper initiation, so that they may be able to understand the sacred rites and take part in them wholeheartedly, and they will also need personally to celebrate the sacred mysteries, as well as popular devotions, which are imbued with the spirit of the Liturgy¹³⁵. In addition, they must learn how to observe the liturgical laws, so that life in seminaries and houses of religious may be thoroughly influenced by the spirit of the Liturgy. Priests, both secular and religious, who are already working in the Lord's vineyard are to be helped by every suitable means to understand ever more fully what it is that*

¹³⁵ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 17.

they are doing when they perform sacred rites; they are to be aided to live the liturgical life and to share it with the faithful entrusted to their care"¹³⁶.

The teaching of the Council on the importance of formation to live the spirit of the Liturgy has still all of its value and actuality, together with the ensuing documents emanated by the Magisterium on this matter¹³⁷. Today we feel still the need for a "*more specific presentation of the liturgical spirituality, so that after the renewal of the rites the relationship between the mystery celebrated in the rites and to be celebrated in one's life may emerge with greater clarity*"¹³⁸. In conclusion it means to encourage the assimilation of the spirit of the biblical and liturgical renewal promoted by the Council, by fostering the transition from its "reform" to its "renewal" which requires a true change of mentality in the approach to the sacred Scripture and in the way of celebrating and living the Liturgy.

How can we, for instance, celebrate fruitfully the Liturgy without everybody's proper knowledge and habitual contact with the sacred Scripture, which allows us to enter directly and with familiarity into the contents of the texts which are read and listened to? Or how can we pray the Liturgy of the

¹³⁶ Sacrosanctum Concilium, 18.

¹³⁷ Cf. Ratio fundamentalis, 1970; *In Ecclesiasticam Futurorum* (Liturgical Formation in the Seminaries), 1979.

¹³⁸ *Enchiridion CEI*, vol. 3, p. 1584, n. 2886.

Hours, attuning the voice with the heart, without the correct knowledge of the nature, contents and of modalities of celebrating each Hour, and without deepening the biblical texts, particularly the Psalms?¹³⁹ The *Prenotanda* of the different liturgical books constitute, for instance, an irreplaceable source of theological and spiritual deepening of the Liturgy.

Initial formation has to take care with specific programs and methods the progressive initiation to sapiential knowledge of the Scripture and to the true liturgical spirit which leads to unify celebration and life. Such formation has then to continue on a personal level, opportunely sustained by the community life and by the different moments and courses of permanent formation. These shall always foresee in their programs specific inputs on biblical and liturgical formation.

Suggestions for reflection, revision of life and planning

Living spirituality means first of all starting afresh from the person of Christ, true God and true man, present in his Word, “the first source of all spirituality”.

(Restarting Afresh from Christ, 24)

¹³⁹ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 90.

Fidelity to personal and liturgical prayer will require a true effort not to allow oneself to be swallowed up in frenetic activism.

(Restarting Afresh from Christ, 25)

1. Are we convinced of the importance of the knowledge of the sacred Scripture for the personal and community spiritual life? Are we personally committed in deepening, internalizing and living the Word of God we celebrate daily?
2. Is Sacred Scripture the book of our daily meditation? In the plans of formation, especially in the novitiates and centers of studies, is spiritual life based on the Word of God? Are we educating ourselves on the Sacred Scripture through practical experiences of Lectio Divina?
3. Are we deepening and living the spirit of the Liturgy which requires an attentive and heartfelt participation to the different celebrations? How do we celebrate particularly the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours?
4. What is the place given to biblical and liturgical formation in our Rogationist life? Is it lived as personal and permanent commitment? Is it present, and in which measure, in the plans of formation on the different level?

5. Which is the quality of our community prayer and which incidence do liturgical celebration bear on our life, on the fraternal relationships and in our apostolate?

PART 3

ROGATIONIST SPIRITUALITY

“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” (Mt. 9:37; Lk. 10:3)

Our “Original Inspiration”

The evangelical pericope of the Rogate is our “original inspiration.”

26. In his 21st of the “40 declarations and promises” our Founder writes that the words of Jesus: *“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (Mt 9:37; Lk 10:3), form “the distinctive spirit” of our Institute. In the same text he wants every Rogationist to declare: “I will consider these words as directed to the members of this Pious Institute, in a very particular way, as received*

directly from the divine lips of Jesus Christ. With this spirit I will consider myself fortunate to be called to the propagation of these divine words to which I intend to dedicate my life and all of myself. I will consider the opportunity of this holy mission in our time and the importance of the vow of obedience to this Divine Command to which the members of this Pious Institute are called”.

These words of Jesus, therefore, which we synthetically denominate as the “Gospel of the Rogate”¹⁴⁰, in the experience and in the intention of the Founder, and according to the tradition codified in our Constitutions¹⁴¹, represent the essential nucleus of what the Council calls “original inspiration”, to which we need to return continually for nourishing and living our specific spirituality in the Church.

Rogationist spirituality

The Rogate source of our spirituality

27. The capitular document “*Called to stay with Him*” specifies that the Rogationist spirituality represents our particular itinerary of holiness, the specific way of our conforming union to Christ ¹⁴². Then, quoting the

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 30.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Constitutions*, 4-5. 62-63.

¹⁴² Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 37.

Constitutions, it says that “*The spirituality of the Rogationists springs forth from the peculiar charism and the specific mission of the Congregation, to which they are consecrated through the fourth vow*”¹⁴³.

According to this precious indication, we can say that our spirituality through the constant action of the Holy Spirit, is born from the live listening to the evangelical words of the Rogate interpreted and actualized in fidelity to the experience and spirit of the Founder in the living tradition of our Institute¹⁴⁴. Such spirituality is inclusive of the three dimensions of our specific mission, namely: prayer for the good workers, diffusion of this prayer, witnessing of charity among the little ones and the poor¹⁴⁵; it involves our whole life because we consecrate this mission through a special vow¹⁴⁶.

“*The Rogationist - our General Chapter affirms - is identified with the Rogate without solution of continuity: it involves life into prayer and prayer into life, it changes praying energy into working energy*”¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴³ Cf. Constitutions, 98.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 37.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Constitutions, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Constitutions, 63.

¹⁴⁷ Capitular Documents, 201.

The meaning of the Rogationist spirituality is in its configuration to the Christ of the Rogate.

28. The Capitular documents have synthesized *our specific conforming union to Christ* with a very expressive image in order to understand the point of origin and reference of our spirituality: *“Consecrated life is an ecclesial representation of the mystery of Christ. Each family of consecrated persons, however, presents such a mystery lived in the light of a particular moment of His life and messianic ministry.*

“For us Rogationists it means to re-live and announce the whole mystery of Christ starting from the moment in which he commands the Rogationist prayer, and shows its necessity. He himself does it by praying for the apostles and calling them to collaborate effectively with himself, by working in favor of the ‘abandoned crowds’. (Cf. Mt 9:33-38; 10; Lk 6:12-19; 9:1-6).

Such a vision of Christ’s mystery, which already we use to call ‘Christ of the Rogate’, ... can duly constitute for us a great prospective of synthesis of the whole Gospel and the living center of our spirituality to which we have to bring back its many essential aspects in a harmonious way and without forcing them”¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁸ Called to stay with Him, 33; Cf. 8th General Chapter, Documents, 163-164

Through the religious consecration, specified for us by the fourth vow, we intend to relate ourselves and to be configured to Christ exactly according to his way of being and acting. We want to re-present Jesus in the Church and in the world today starting from this particular aspect of his mystery and his ministry¹⁴⁹, by sharing and expressing his compassion for the abandoned crowds with the same feelings and attitudes¹⁵⁰.

Central element of the teaching of Jesus in the pages of the Gospel of the Rogate is the prayer to the Lord of the harvest to send the workers in its harvest. It is a prayer, which springs from his compassionate heart¹⁵¹; a prayer which is never separated, according to the example and the teaching of Father Hannibal, from the apostolic action for most needy neighbors¹⁵². “The charism of the Congregation demands from its members a qualified spirit of prayer, zeal and generosity in their undertakings, to which they commit themselves without counting the cost; ready to sacrifice themselves completely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls”¹⁵³.

Rogationist celebrations express our specific spirituality

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Called to Stay with Him*, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 31. 34.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 31.

¹⁵² Cf. *Rogationist Anthology*, p.226; *Constitutions*, 9.

¹⁵³ *Constitutions*, 10.

29. Besides prayer for good workers and the ensuing works of charity wanted by the Founder¹⁵⁴, we express our specific spirituality in the *sound traditions*, which make reference to the charism and, in a very particular way, to the prayer life of the Congregation¹⁵⁵. *“In this context the celebrations of the proper feasts, always in line with the requirements of the Liturgy, acquire importance”*¹⁵⁶.

Among our *proper feasts* the document mentions first of all July 1st, the Name of Jesus and the solemnity of the Sacred Heart¹⁵⁷. They are the three main Rogationist celebrations, which assume a primary importance for our spirituality because they make direct reference to the person of Christ and because of their clear relationship with the charism¹⁵⁸, as it is continually underlined by the Writings of the Founder and codified by the Constitutions¹⁵⁹. The capitular document exhorts to adequately value them and to celebrate them in the context and in the spirit of the Liturgical Year¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁴ Called to Stay with Him, 31-32.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Norms, 92.

¹⁵⁶ Called to stay with Him, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Called to stay with Him, 52-54

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Circular Letters: With the Church into the new millennium. To live the Jubilee in the spirit of the Rogate, 11; In the footsteps of Father Hannibal, 21.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Constitutions, 11-12. 95. 101.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 64.

Then it introduces Mary as “*Queen and Mother of the Evangelical Rogation*”, because, as the Founder teaches, she *picked up in her Immaculate Heart the command of Jesus* to pray for the workers of the Gospel and she faithfully accomplished it¹⁶¹. In fact, the Constitutions exhort us to contemplate particularly Mary “*as the Virgin who guarded and lived the divine command of the Rogate*”¹⁶².

The capitular text makes then reference to the feasts and memories of the Saints¹⁶³ 166, underlining their relationship with the charism because in them we contemplate the exemplary models of those good workers whom unceasingly we implore from the Lord of the harvest. It exhorts to keep in mind particularly, the celebrations of the *Celestial Rogationists* and of the special Patrons of our Congregation: St. Michael the Archangel, St. Joseph, the Apostles, St. Anthony of Padua. Finally, the Chapter affirms that the celebration of the feast of our Founder, Blessed Hannibal Mary Di Francia, assumes a special importance for our spiritual life, as *a sign of a constant and growing relationship with him, of progressive assimilation and faithful incarnation of his charismatic heritage*.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 55; Cf. DI FRANCIA A. M., Writings, vol. 54, pp. 165-166.

¹⁶² Constitutions, 1.

¹⁶³ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 56.

Unified spirituality

In the Liturgy we live and revitalize the Rogationist spirituality

30. “*The “genuine sources of Christian spirituality” (Word of God and Liturgy), linked with the original charismatic inspiration of each Institute, as codified by its Constitutions, generate a specific spirituality*”¹⁶⁴.

It is an important statement because it brings us to consider and to live the spiritual life in a unified way, where our specific spirituality which springs from the charism is harmonically inserted in the Liturgy (Word and Sacrament) and anchored to it as to its base and foundation¹⁶⁵. Spiritual life is a process of union and conformation to the Easter mystery of Christ under the constant action of the Holy Spirit in the Church¹⁶⁶. For us Rogationists, life in the Spirit is characterized by focusing on a particular aspect of the life of Christ, the Gospel of the Rogate, starting from which we read and live His whole mystery. But it is in the Liturgy that all our process of union and conformation to Christ finds its origin and conclusion, because it is originated in the baptism, it is specified with our particular religious consecration, it is nourished by the sacraments and prayer, it is expressed in our life and apostolate.

¹⁶⁴ Called to stay with Him, 46.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 22.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 93.

Our documents, in fact, recommend us to particular care for the liturgical prayer¹⁶⁷, and they speak of the Liturgy as *the supreme expression of the Rogationist prayer and the place [...] for accepting, experimenting and living in fullness the Rogationist vocation*"¹⁶⁸. Our Constitutions on the other hand say that the first fundamental sources of our spiritual life must be the sacred Scripture and the Liturgy and that all our life must be animated by the Eucharistic mystery in which we realize a life of offering with Christ to the Father and we unite ourselves to him in the most perfect way¹⁶⁹.

We can say then that the whole Liturgy, from the Eucharist to the Liturgical Year, to the Liturgy of the Hours, to the celebrations of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, is lived by us in the Rogationist dimension and that the whole Rogationist life, from prayer to works, must be lived in a liturgical perspective. In the Liturgy, through the Spirit, we are united to Christ, *the divine Rogationist*, and made sharers in his compassion for man and women of today. With Him and in Him we implore from Father the gift of the workers of the Gospel; from Him we draw that love which allows us to see God in the neighbor and the neighbor in God and makes us zealous in announcing the Gospel and in helping the little ones and the poor.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Constitutions, 99.

¹⁶⁸ The Rogationist Formation, 285.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Constitutions, 91-92.

Thus conceived and lived, our spiritual experience assumes a theological character and an ecclesial shape; it roots our life and apostolate in the mystery of Christ and of the Church; it builds in us the true image of Christ, that is the Christian holiness, starting from the initiative of God as initial and founding gift which it arises and accompanies our work always seen as answer to and synergy with the divine action.

The osmosis between God's Word, Liturgy and charism revives in us the evangelical spirit of the origins, makes to perceive and live the actuality of our mission, revitalizes our relationship with the Founder and consolidates our love to the Institute as the concrete place of our growth in Christ.

Therefore, since the first years of the formation we need to aim at a spirituality that is solidly founded on the Word of God and on the Liturgy and so as to be a concrete expression of affiliation to our religious Family and its charism.

Pedagogical Itineraries

31. We want to point out some practical formative indications to help translating into practice what we have been exposing until now, keeping in mind also all that the capitular document *Called to stay with Him*¹⁷⁰ said in this regard. The reflections done, the principles exposed, the suggestions proposed from time to time have to find more explicit acceptance in our programs of personal and

¹⁷⁰ Cf. nn. 46-70.

community life as well as in the programs of formation on the different levels.

1. To contemplate the face of Christ: Studying the sources of our spirituality

Called to found our spiritual building upon the rock that Christ is (cf Mt 7:24- 27; 1Pt 2:4), as Rogationists we have to fix continually our look of faith first of all on the *Christ of the Rogate* and to make him the center of our mind, heart, and life, by listening time and again from his adorable mouth the divine words (cf Mt 9:35- 38; Lk 10:2¹⁷¹), sharing his very feelings of *mercy, compassion* and *apostolic zeal*¹⁷². The full understanding of these words of Jesus, that is the *intelligence* and the *zeal* of the Rogate, is first of all a gift from the Spirit and is to be asked therefore through assiduous prayer. It derives also from deep spiritual communion with the Founder and with the history and life of the Institute¹⁷³. The continuous return to the life and writings of the Father becomes thus essential for us, a main point of reference for the itinerary of our Rogationist life¹⁷⁴.

2. In the Word of God: God's Word is the ideal context for the understanding of the Rogate

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Rogationist Anthology*, p. 38.

¹⁷² Cf. VII General Chapter, *Rogationist Communion and Community*, 25.

¹⁷³ Cf. VII General Chapter, *Rogationist Communion and Community*, 34.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 37

The Rogationist spiritual experience has its point of reference in the contemplation of the Christ of the Rogate, but it has to gradually lead us to know and to share all the expressions of the face of Christ, as it shines through the Sacred Scripture. *Our Blessed Founder* - the general Chapter says – *nourished his spiritual life with the consistent reading and meditation of the Sacred Scripture, so that all his speeches and writings are interwoven with continuous and appropriate references to the Word of God. We, Rogationists therefore have to “meditate regularly on the Gospel texts and the New Testament writings which describe the word and examples of Christ and Mary and the apostolica vivendi forma”*¹⁷⁵.

The capitular document remembers that “*the Word of God, constantly read, meditated and prayed becomes the ideal context where we understand and live the gospel of the Rogate today*”¹⁷⁶; it confirms that our fraternal life in community is sustained by the common reading of the Word of God and it recalls once more the attention on the importance of the *lectio divina*, exhorting us to plan and to realize suitable forms of prayerful reading of the Word of God inspired to the charism. It is an experience – the Chapter continues - to be shared also with the laity¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁵ Called to stay with Him, 61.

¹⁷⁶ Called to stay with Him, 61.

¹⁷⁷ Called to stay with Him, 62.

We have to welcome in fullness the indications of the Chapter and endeavor, all of us, to structure our formative journey so that the Word of God may permeate and enlighten all our life.

3. *The Eucharist as our center*

The Eucharist center and heart of personal and community spiritual life

If the Liturgy is the summit and source of the whole life of the Church, this is said in particular way for the Eucharist, center of the whole sacramental economy¹⁷⁸. The Lord's Easter, through its memory, which is the Eucharist, “transfers” in us in order to give rise to a life according to Christ, in the communion with his death and resurrection. That is why the Eucharist, Easter of Christ and of the Church, “*By its very nature the Eucharist is at the center of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities*”¹⁷⁹. Set at the center of the life of the religious community, the Eucharist rhythms and means the fraternal communion, inspires and nourishes its mission¹⁸⁰; it manifests and builds the very communion with the whole Institute and with the Church.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 1.

¹⁷⁹ *Vita Consecrata*, 95.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. VII General Chapter, Rogationist Communion and Community, 61-67; Called to stay with Him, 65.

The centrality of the Eucharist in the religious community is present in the historical conscience of the consecrated life since its beginnings. It is not by chance that the spiritual experience of Father Hannibal has a strong connotation eucharistic; he writes that the Eucharist is “*the whole loving, fruitful, dutiful and permanent center of this Pious Work of the interests of the Heart of Jesus*” and that “*Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament must be considered the true, effective and immediate Founder of the Congregation*”¹⁸¹.

The eucharistic celebration on July 1st, which commemorates the first coming of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament into the Avignone Quarter, a day which the Founder considers as the birth day of the Work¹⁸², assumes for us symbolic value and ties forever our history and our spirituality to the mystery of the Eucharist: “*July 1st is for us the day 'symbol' of divine communion, a reflection and anticipation of that communion which will be consummated in eternity*”¹⁸³.

Committed to promote the primacy of spiritual life, in fidelity to the tradition and the teaching of the Church on consecrated life and in fidelity to the spirit of our blessed Father Founder, our 9th general Chapter has strongly recalled the importance of the Eucharist, defining it as the

¹⁸¹ *Rogationist Anthology*, p. 427; *Constitutions*, 12.

¹⁸² Cf. *Constitutions*, 95.

¹⁸³ VII General Chapter, *Rogationist Communion and Community*, 26.

*“center and heart of the personal and community spiritual life”*¹⁸⁴.

For the Easter mystery of Christ to become for us a true spiritual experience molding our life and nourishing fraternal communion, it is essential to form ourselves to a more participated, alive, caring and internalized Eucharistic celebration. The celebration of the Eucharist must not be for us one of the many activities to accomplish, but it has to be the most important action, the priority commitment, the heart of every our day.

Often the common celebration of the Eucharist is not possible because of the composition and of the apostolic commitments of our Communities; nevertheless every Community, also those directly committed in the parish apostolate, have to find proper occasions for a more frequent community celebration; the capitular document suggests at least once a month¹⁸⁵.

Finally, in the celebration of the Eucharist, supreme prayer of Christ and the Church, we have to learn to express, and to nourish our specific spirituality, by praying and offering our life together with Christ to the Father for the gift of the good workers and for the salvation of the world.

4. With the rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours

¹⁸⁴ Called to stay with Him, 48.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 65.

In the Liturgy of the Hours we express the Rogationist spirit

Our daily community prayer is centered, since a long time already, on the Liturgy of the Hours, especially in the celebration of the Lauds and Vespers¹⁸⁶.

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of Christ and of the Church, sanctification of the time, prolongation and extension during the day of the Easter mystery celebrated in the Eucharist. The Chapter has exhorted us to value in a better way its celebration, *“by learning to immerse into them the life, hopes and plans of the community in the light of the charism”*¹⁸⁷ and to discover in the psalms *“Christ’s voice praying for us and with us”*; in it we *“unite ourselves to Christ who pleads unceasingly to the Father for the gift of good laborers to be sent in the harvest of the world, especially to help and defend the most needy”*¹⁸⁸.

To pray the psalms in a Rogationist key, especially in some particular circumstances (Rogationist feasts, eucharistic adoration for vocations, prolonged moments of prayer, prayer with the people of God) it can be of help for us either the adding of fitting monitions and introductions to the Psalms, or the use of the psalm prayers, on the model of the

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Constitutions, 100.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 66.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 48.

Rogationist Psalter as well as the adding of invocations and spontaneous intercessions.

The capitular document *Called to stay with Him*, in analyzing the situation of the liturgical life in our communities, states: “*The Liturgy of the Hours is regularly celebrated at times in a moving way, at times as a routine. We feel the necessity of a liturgical deepening and studying of the Psalter*”¹⁸⁹. We can still consider this observation as valid. It is always fitting to care properly for the celebration, by giving it suitable time and praying the psalms with a contemplative rhythm so as to favor the meditation and the assimilation of the Word of God. In particular circumstances psalms may be sung, as required by their nature and poetic structure.

It is important to also educate our laity to pray with the liturgy of the Hours, which is the prayer of the whole people of God; especially in our parishes it is opportune to encourage the celebration of Lauds and Vespers as the morning and evening prayer of the Christian community¹⁹⁰.

5. *Within the framework of the Liturgical Year*

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 13.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 100; *Novo millennio Ineunte*, 34

The Rogationist spirituality in the vocational formative itinerary of the Liturgical Year

The proclamation of the Word of God, the celebration of the Eucharist and the prayer of the Hours, every day and every feast, are realized through readings and formulas of prayer that vary according to the arrangement of the Liturgical Year which is the celebration of the Paschal mystery of Christ as the center of the history of salvation.

The Church invites us to plan the personal and community journey of spiritual life, by living the grace proper to each aspect of the mystery of Christ present and working in the various feasts and in the different liturgical times. It in fact *“Within the cycle of a year, moreover, she unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation until [...] the expectation of blessed hope and of the coming of the Lord. Recalling thus the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present for all time, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold upon them and become filled with saving grace”*¹⁹¹.

The *Liturgical Year*, as the annual sacramental celebration of the whole mystery of Christ, is the fundamental itinerary of spiritual life, “sacrament” of our progressive insertion in Christ and of our gradual conformation to Him¹⁹². All our

¹⁹¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 102

¹⁹² Called to stay with Him, 48.

spiritual formation must be structured according to the rhythms and the spirit of the Liturgical Year, overcoming a certain *analytical-devotional perspective*, which is not wrong but reductive because it analyzes and contemplates the mysteries of Christ not so much as salvific events but as “edifying” episodes intended for arousing the piety, devotion and moral imitation¹⁹³. From the Liturgical Year, which comes to us as an itinerary of vocational growth¹⁹⁴, we have to draw inspiration to revive our charism; to combine the spiritual and ascetic elements which originate from our tradition with the charism; draw and to live the Rogationist spirit from its various elements and commemorative moments.

*“We are called – the document Called to Stay with Him affirms - to rediscover and give value, through spiritual initiative and experiences attuned to our days, the rhythms of the Liturgical Year and of the feasts typical to the tradition of our Institute”*¹⁹⁵.

Therefore a more profound knowledge of the theology and spirituality of the Liturgical Year is needed to value at their utmost its pedagogical elements and to live its spirit in consonance with all the aspects of our charism.

¹⁹³ Cf. AUGÉ M., *Vita Consacrata e Liturgia*, in “Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità”, Edizioni S. Paul, 2001, p. 2087.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. AUGÉ M., *Anno Liturgico*, in “Dizionario di Pastorale Vocazionale, ER, Roma 2002, pp. 51-56.

¹⁹⁵ Called to stay with Him, 64.

*“In the context of the Liturgical Year, - we read again in our capitular document - we are invited to a better highlighting, in our communities, of the sanctification of Sunday, our weekly Easter, as a spousal dialogue with the Lord in the celebration of the Eucharist, in our availability to ministry and ecclesial service, in community prayer and joyful and fraternal encounter”*¹⁹⁶.

The special seasons of the Liturgical Year, Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter, need to be understood and lived in a better way, not only on the personal level but also as an expression of community life, by assimilating faithfully their spirituality and following their formative itineraries, enriched by the testimony and by the spiritual teachings of our blessed Father Founder. In this context we can rediscover and live the ascetic elements typical to our tradition and to the Church, such as prayer, fasting, penance, charity ¹⁹⁷.

Also the different expressions of the “popular piety” and the “pious exercises” recognized and recommended by the Church, in which can fruitfully be expressed the Rogationist spirit, must be lived in harmony with the spirit of the liturgical seasons.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Called to stay with Him, 64.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 105; Called to stay with Him, 50. 70.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 12-13. 105; Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy, 94.

In the Liturgical Year, besides the solemnities and feasts of the Lord, the Church celebrates the feasts and memories of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the martyrs and of the other saints,¹⁹⁹ fittingly joined to the mystery of Christ according to the spirit of the liturgical time. Also in this context are to be placed and lived the spiritual elements of our tradition, which refer to the Mother of God and to the Saints. Our devotion to Mary, as *our special identification card*, can be valued in full in the Marian celebrations of the Liturgical Year, during which the Blessed Virgin Mary, because of her peculiar participation in the mystery of Christ, is constantly celebrated under an admirable variety of aspects. We are thus educated by the Liturgy to contemplate Mary in the perspective of faith, which means, fully inserted in the mystery of Christ and of the Church.²⁰⁰

During the year a peculiar relevance is assumed by the Rogationist feasts: July the First, the Sacred Heart, the Name of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary. They are to be lived as meaningful and privileged moments of our spirituality. Let them, therefore, not be improvised, but adequately prepared by availing of appropriate aids for a more profound comprehension of the mystery we celebrate.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 105; Called to stay with Him, 103-104.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *Called to stay with Him*, 55.

²⁰¹ *Called to stay with Him*, 64.

The Rogationist celebrations require to be lived in the spirit of the Liturgy, as specified by the general Chapter.²⁰² This means not only formal respect of the liturgical time in which they are celebrated, but also reference to the Word of God, appropriate connection to the salvific mystery of Christ and to the life of the Church, overcoming of a merely devotional vision.

6. *The Sacrament of the Reconciliation*

The sacrament of Penance sustains our journey of conversion.

Our life in Christ and in the Spirit has one of its more meaningful moments of growth in the Sacrament of the Reconciliation, as the Constitutions remind us.²⁰³

Also the general Chapter has recalled its importance.²⁰⁴ Community celebrations of Penance are to be favored the in our Communities, or among nearby Communities, especially in the special times of the Liturgical Year, so as to underline the dimension of the common commitment and the fraternal solidarity in the journey of conversion. The rich spiritual and ascetic teaching of the Founder on this matter is of great help and stimulus to us.²⁰⁵

²⁰² *Called to stay with Him*, 51.

²⁰³ Cf. *Constitutions*, 96. On this theme John Paul II has recently issued an Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu proprio* “*Misericordia Dei*”.

²⁰⁴ *Called to stay with Him*, 48. 58.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *Forty declarations and promises*, XXVIII.

7. The Rogationist prayer: Particular moments of the Rogationist prayer

“For us Rogationists – the capitular document Called to stay with Him teaches - prayer for good laborers is at the center of our consecration and mission: it permeates and sanctifies our whole life, our staying with the Lord and our being good laborers in his field.”²⁰⁶

“Our very name as Rogationists qualifies us, - as Paul VI told our capitular Fathers in 1968 – “in the mission and in the image of adorers and implorers for the highest and most beautiful mission: to merit and prepare the vocations for the Kingdom of Christ.”²⁰⁷

Rogationist communities are qualified as permanent schools of prayer for vocations, from which also sensible laity participating in our spirituality must be able to draw.

The charismatic specificity of our prayer, nourished at the living sources of the Word of God and of the Liturgy, finds its main inspiration in the writings of the Founder, especially in the innumerable prayers composed by him. The contents of his prayers is to be continually deepened, assimilated and re-expressed in a way suitable and fitting to the various environments and cultural contexts.

²⁰⁶ *Called to stay with Him*, 68.

²⁰⁷ Holy Father's audience on 14.9.1968.

The Chapter has recalled the meaning and the importance of the Eucharistic adoration for vocations, even by night, recommending its practice on a personal and community level.²⁰⁸ The Eucharistic adoration for vocations, in the spirit of the Founder and in the tradition of the Congregation,²⁰⁹ is part of our specific style of prayer life and is to be lived and transmitted in the Church, especially to the Rogationist laity, with the awareness of it as a particular charismatic grace.

It is important to educate to this type of prayer in the various steps of formation, making reference, besides our literature and tradition, to the rich Magisterium of the Church.²¹⁰ It is everybody's responsibility, nevertheless, to cultivate a solid Eucharistic spirituality capable of expressing itself in the prayer of praise, adoration and supplication for vocations outside and beyond the community moments.²¹¹

A meaningful ecclesial expression of the Rogationist prayer is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The general Chapter defines it as "*Rogationist Day par excellence*",

²⁰⁸ Cf. Called to stay with Him, 48. 65.

²⁰⁹ Norms, 101.

²¹⁰ 213 Cf. *Mysterium fidei; Eucharisticum mysterium*, 38. 50. 58; *Eucharistiae Sacramentum*, 2-3. 79- 90; *Inaestimabile Donum*, 20-23; *Dominicae Cenaе; Prebyterorum Ordinis*, 18; *Contemplative dimension*, 15; *Fraternal life in community*, 14; *Vita Consecrata*, 95.

²¹¹ Cf. Norms, 101.

considering it “a great opportunity [...] so that the Rogate may penetrate ever more profoundly in the heart of the Church.”²¹² It is the task of each Rogationist and, most of all, of our communities to “unite means and energies, to create awareness and give birth to initiatives in order to celebrate fittingly this Day.”

8. Community prayer and personal prayer: Osmosis between community and personal prayer

Spiritual life finds its breath in prayer. Prayer is an art; it is learned by practice; it is dialogue, a relationship of love with God; it demands always commitment, response and personal adhesion. In this sense prayer, also the community prayer, is always a personal prayer; but its contrary is also true: when one prays alone, in private, his prayer keeps always its community dimension, because the individual person always prays as member of the body of Christ that is the Church. The Catechism of the Church teaches: “*Prayer internalizes and assimilates the Liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out "in secret," prayer is always prayer of the Church; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.*”²¹³

There is no opposition between personal-private prayer and community- liturgical prayer, but interaction and osmosis. When one is personally educated to prayer he partakes

²¹² Cf. Called to stay with Him, 80.

²¹³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2655.

fruitfully in the community-liturgical prayer; and when one participates actively in the community-liturgical prayer, his personal prayer is enriched. Liturgical prayer, with its reference to the Word of God and to the salvific mystery of Christ, remains always the source, the model and the norm of every Christian prayer.

Our itineraries of formation to spiritual life have to stress and care much for the aspect of educating to a personal prayer based on the Word of God, inspired and substantiated by the Liturgy, animated by the Rogationist charism, lived in the originality of one's own spiritual experience and open to communion.

Assiduous and united in prayer

Common texts for community prayer enhances the prayerful unity of hearts in our communities.

32. The book of the *Acts* reports that the Apostles, after the Ascension, together with some women and with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, “*with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer*” (1, 14).

Also our Communities scattered all over the world are *steadfast and with one accord* in prayer. Persistence is represented by the daily rhythm of the community prayer; harmony is the fruit of the communion of hearts nourished by the same ideal of prayer addressed unceasingly to Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

In order to favor the prayerful unity of the hearts in our communities it may be useful to revise the texts for the community prayer and to compose new texts, which may be capable of expressing in a better way the integration between the Word of God, Liturgy and the Rogationist charism, always respecting the linguistic and cultural diversities.

Thus, it is my intention, as announced in the letter of initial planning,²¹⁴ to create a general Committee, representative of all the Circumscriptions, to study and elaborate, as far as possible, some texts of prayer inspired by the criteria exposed in this present letter.

The texts to be elaborated may be the following:

1) *The Rogationist 'Proprium'* inclusive of the main Rogationist celebrations foreseen by our liturgical calendar, using and re-elaborating, if needed, the existing material of the book 'Rogationists at prayer'.

2) *Lauds and Vespers of the four weeks* with psalms introduced by a Rogationist "sentence" and concluded by a Rogationist psalm prayer, availing of the material of the Rogationist Psalter.

3) *The Rogationist Ritual*: admission to the postulancy, entrance to the novitiate, first profession, renewal of the

²¹⁴ Cf. Together to Cross the Threshold of the Year 2000. Outlines for the 1998-2004 planning of the General Government 1998-2004, 14, f, i, l.

vows, perpetual profession, Visits of the General / Provincial Superior, election of the General / Provincial Superior, beginning of the service of the Superior in the community, rite for the funerals.

4) *Prayers for the blessing of the meals.*

In the newness of the Spirit

Biblical and liturgical inculturation is now expected to enter our formation plans

33. *“In crossing the threshold of the third millennium, we live the expectations of the hope which does not fail (Rom 5:5), but feel also the need of renewal and conversion which cannot be postponed as the best disposition to facilitate the creative action of the Spirit.”*²¹⁵ Thus says the capitular document *Called to stay with Him* in its closing page.

The biblical and liturgical inculturation of our charism, as main purpose of this letter, wants to be an invitation and a means to favor the work of the Spirit of God who certainly guides and sustains history beyond our expectations and forecast.

The themes suggested, in line and as implementation of the capitular choice on the primacy of spiritual life, must be deepened and discussed. This letter offers an occasion for it.

²¹⁵ Called to stay with Him, 102.

This coming 1 to 3 November 2002 the Convention of the Rogationist Family will be held with the theme “*Liturgical Year and Rogationist celebrations.*” It is a very fitting occasion to reflect together and to enrich the themes suggested by the letter. Other seminars of studies, meetings and debates on the theme can be planned on the level of Circumscriptions. This letter also constitutes a means of verification for the personal and community life. It could be used, for instance, for the revision and planning of the community life, keeping in mind, for a proper verification of the journey accomplished, of the indications of the capitular document *Called to stay with Him.*

To underline the common formative commitment for this year, I suggest that at the beginning of the Advent (for instance during the first Vespers of the First Sunday) the solemn enthronement of the book of the Word of God in all the Communities and throughout the entire year it will remain beside the Eucharistic table.

I entrust this letter of mine to the personal responsibility of each confrere, to the Superiors of the Circumscriptions and of the local Communities, to those in charge of the houses of formation and to the animators of the permanent formation, so that they may make it the object of their attention and verification in their respective plans of formation.

Suggestions for reflection, revision of life and planning

“For many years now, the liturgical prayer of the Hours and the celebration of the Eucharist have assumed a central position in the life of all types of communities and of fraternities, once again giving them a biblical and ecclesial vigour. They also foster mutual edification and can become a witness to be before God and with God, “a house and a school of communion”.

(Restarting Afresh from Christ, 24)

1. Which attention are we giving to a personal and community level to the pedagogical and spiritual itinerary of the Liturgical Year? In particular how do we live the grace of the special seasons of Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter?
2. Can we develop and express our specific spirituality during the Liturgical Year?
3. Which attention do we give to the celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints during the Liturgical Year?
4. How are the Rogationist celebrations lived in our communities?
5. Are we celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours with a Rogationist spirit?

6. Are we going back frequently to the sources of the Rogationist spirituality, especially to the writings of the Founder?

Conclusion

Dearest Confreres,

The *Word of God*, the *Liturgy*, the *Gospel of the Rogate* are the sources of our spiritual life. As baptized and consecrated Rogationists we have welcomed the invitation of the Lord: “*Come to the water*”.

Let us go back continually to quench our thirst at the pure and perennial sources of the life in the Spirit and to transmit the same invitation to others; just as suggested to us by the Scripture: “*The Spirit and the bride say: ‘Come!’ Let him who listens repeat: ‘Come!’ Let him who is thirsty, come; let him who wants, draw freely the water of life (Rev 22,17).*”

Jesus, crucified and risen for us, is the *Lamb on the throne*, the *Shepherd who leads us to the sources of the waters of life* (cf. Rev 7, 17); He enlightens our journey with his Word, He nourishes us with his Body and Blood, He gives us his Spirit and sends us in the world to announce and bear witness to the Gospel of the Rogate.

May the Christ of the Rogate, in his merciful goodness, accompany and bless these our intentions and commitments through the intercession of Mary, Mother and Queen of the evangelical Rogation, and of our blessed Father Founder.

Fr. Giorgio Nalin, RCJ
(*Superior General*)

*Silang (Philippines),
July 1, 2002, Eucharistic Feast of the Rogationist Family*

