



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO ON THE 10th GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE ROGATIONISTS OF THE HEART OF JESUS

To the Very Reverend Father Giorgio Nalin

*Superior General of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus*¹. Most Reverend Father, I greet you with joy and affection, together with your Confreres as they gather with you for the Tenth General Chapter of your Congregation that is still celebrating the recent canonization of its Founder, St Hannibal Mary Di Francia. Everyone cherishes vivid memories of last 16 May. On that morning, I had the joy, before a vast and intensely fervent crowd, of adding to the roll of Saints the one I had described as a *"renowned apostle of prayer for vocations and true father of orphans and the poor"*. His charism now shines with new light for all. Fr Hannibal is a radiant intercessor and model, whose living presence with the Merciful Father gives to the prayer of hearts renewed confidence that their plea is heard, especially with regard to the invitation to pray that Christ himself addresses to us: *"Rogate!"* [pray] (Mt 9: 38).² *"Rogate!"*. It was this exhortation of the Lord which, from the years of his youth, enraptured and transformed the keen mind and ardent heart of St Hannibal Mary: *"Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci. Rogate ergo Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem suam"* (Mt 9: 37-38; Lk 10: 2). Your Founder saw in Jesus' words a precise programme for life and action. The Rogationists' mission is based entirely on the programme suggested by the word: *"Rogate"*. In response to this imperative, the gaze of faith contemplating the harvest becomes a prayer that the Lord will send out plenty of labourers. This mission is particularly timely at the beginning of the third millennium, and requires good, hard-working apostles among whom you yourselves must and ought to be the first. It is right, therefore, that you should wish to rediscover and revive your charism, attentively analyzing the needs of the Church and the world in the light of Jesus' perennial teaching on the fundamental importance of prayer.³ *"Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci"*. Today, the harvest to which we are sent out appears more plentiful than ever. The "global village" that our planet has become, confined by the communications network and political, economic and social interests that are often at variance, feels an urgent need of workers of reconciliation, witnesses of the Truth that saves and builders of the one true and lasting peace, founded on justice and forgiveness. Then, if we shift our gaze to scrutinize the depths of hearts, the desire and expectation of the life that comes from on High appear to us broader and deeper. As we face these huge, urgent needs, our own strength proves inadequate. *"Operarii autem pauci"*. Considering the needs of the poor neighbourhood where he had chosen to live and work, Avignone di Messina, the question St Hannibal felt the most keenly, as did the disciples facing the hungry crowds, challenges our own feelings too: *"where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?"* (Mt 15:

33). The bread of justice and peace can only come from on High: this is why the most fundamental of all needs is the need for "labourers", of which Jesus speaks, men and women who spare no efforts in transmitting the Word of life to the world, calling hearts to conversion, offering the divine gift of Grace to build bridges of solidarity and conditions of justice in which every human life can express itself with dignity.⁴ "*Rogate ergo Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem suam*". With these words Jesus shows us what to do in response to the immensity of the task that lies before us. First of all we should pray: "*Rogate ergo!*". Prayer is the fertile root and essential nourishment of every action intended to be effective for the Kingdom of God. It is by praying that we will obtain workers from the Lord to till the ground, plough the furrows, scatter the seed, watch over its growth and harvest the mature ears of wheat. By praying, we will rediscover the primacy of the contemplative dimension of life and obtain the strength of faith that conquers the world. Today, after the fall of the totalitarian ideologies of the modern era, faith appears ever more clearly as an anchor of salvation that we need more urgently than ever. "*Rogate*": with this invitation, Jesus asks that our whole life become a prayer and that this prayer give life to credible witnesses to Christ who are in love with him and his Gospel. Praying for good workers means seeking to be good workers, constantly adapting the choices of our hearts and our daily activities to the demands of following Christ. The call to the universal vocation of holiness that I wanted to propose once again in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (cf. nn. 30-31) rings out in particularly clear tones for the apostles of the "*Rogate*", whose mission is to spend themselves without reserve as humble and faithful workers at the service of the coming of God's Kingdom, praying daily for vocations, spreading this prayerful spirit everywhere and promoting all vocations.⁵ Dear Rogationists, the Church and the world expect of you renewed fidelity to the charism of the apostles of the "*Rogate*" that distinguishes you. Live the joy of your vocation, therefore, with all the passion that the Spirit kindles in your hearts and do not let the People of God and of all humanity be deprived of what the Redeemer himself asked for: "*Rogate!*". Spare no effort in working for the temporal and spiritual good of your neighbour, after the example of your Father Founder, through the education and sanctification of boys and young men, evangelization, human promotion and assistance to the poorest of the poor (cf. *Constitutions*, n. 5). By your attentive proclamation of the Gospel to the young generations, you know that you are serving the cause for which your life becomes prayer and deserves to be spent. May the commitment to evangelization, from the first proclamation to catechesis, combined with generous service to the weakest, especially children and young people who have no family or educational support, be both your daily concern and the concrete, active and faithful way in which you prepare the ground so that the seeds of vocations which the Lord generously sows so the harvest may flourish in response to your convinced and faithful prayers. Missionary zeal is an intrinsic part of the identity of apostles of the "*Rogate!*". Contemplation of the "plentiful harvest" and the "labourers" who are "few", cannot but open the heart to the desire for the universal evangelization of peoples. So it was that from the outset your holy Founder wanted his sons to be attentive and available for the *missio ad gentes*.⁶ I pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the discernment you are carrying out in your Chapter sessions and in the decisions that will result. May the Virgin Mother Mary, tenderly loved by St Hannibal Mary Di Francia, be the star of your renewed missionary outreach at the beginning of the new millennium. May she, the *Virgo fidelis*, obtain for you fidelity in listening, intensity of faith, perseverance in prayer and the inclination for inner silence and contemplation of God. May the Mother of Fair Love sustain you in the exercise of your daily apostolate. May St Hannibal, a wonderful example of total dedication to the cause of the "*Rogate*", intercede for you! With these hopes, I cordially impart my Blessing to you, dear Father, and to your Confreres who are taking part in the Chapter. I willingly extend it to the Daughters of Divine Zeal who share your charism and are also about to begin their own General Chapter, to the lay people inspired by your spirituality and your mission, and all those whom they benefit, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. *From the Vatican, 26 June 2004* JOHN PAUL II

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