

Christmas greetings to the Rosminian Family



Synodality, like this!

FROM your BAPTISM, CHURCH IN MISSION

To Carissima Madre, Sister Antonietta and the dear Rosminian Sisters of Providence, to the Brethren of the Institute of Charity, to the Adopted Daughters and Sons, to the Ascribed and consecrated Ascribed, to Mother General Sister Gaspara and the Sisters of Our Lady of Usambara, to Servidor General deacon Alexander Toro together with the sisters and brothers of Familia Fuente Real, to the dear Carmelite Sisters of Maracaibo, El Alto de Escuque and of Lushoto, to the friends of the Rosminian Family, former students, people close to our communities, relatives, family members, believers close to us, collaborators, and people of good will:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Some homeless people living near St. Peter's Square in Rome were asked during the Synod what they expect from the Church. They replied: "love!"

Faced with a world going up in flames because of wars - and all wars are always fratricidal, there is no such thing as a just war or an innocent war - and in flames because of abuses against creation, what the poor ask for is another fire: a fire of love, the fire that Jesus brought to earth, coming to live among us and being born of a girl who remained a virgin, the fire which once again He would like to rekindle but humanity continues to want to smother, by stoking other fires of destruction and death (cf. Lk 12:49).

In the love of Jesus, in whom you are loved and cherished, in that love which is from the beginning, the Light and Life of every person who comes into this world (Jn 1:9); in that love "which alone makes true history" and which is realised today in you and in this family of ours which is humanity, I say to you: Merry Christmas!

In order to walk together we need to listen to everyone, starting with the poorest. This is also how the Church explains 'pastoral and missionary conversion' which we all can and must undergo and put into practice. Effective and affective listening entails listening to each other without judging each other, listening to what the other really wants to say, listening to the reasons of the other and even more "the reasons of the heart... because the heart has its reasons" (as Blaise Pascal writes in his *Pensieri*), and also listening with the heart in the Holy Spirit.

We also need to glean what the Spirit, what the Lord is saying to the Church (cf. Rev 2:7), and this happens every time we approach a subject, every time we seek to know and love a situation, every time we care for our brothers and sisters, every time we visit, every time we take an interest, every time we ask ourselves: what can we do?

Bethlehem is an image of synodality, and it is always like this wherever Jesus is... it will also be for this reason that Pope Francis asked during the Vigil at the beginning of the Synod to be silent in order to listen, and that he asked at the end of the Synod to adore, as something essential yet something which we have forgotten: it is with Him and around Him, always, that

synodality emerges, like those who walk with purpose, like those who know where they are going - the shepherds know where they must go -, like those who discern - the Magi search the sky, they follow the star. Walking in synodality is neither the path of the lost nor the confused, and nor is it even the consolation of the lost; rather it is the path of the people of God, of those who trust, of those who seek the goal: eternity, happiness, holiness, redeemed humanity. Let us listen to the words of the Holy Father:

Saint Paul tells us that the mystery of the Incarnate Word was “kept secret for long ages” (Rom 16:25), teaching us that silence guards the mystery, as Abraham guarded the Covenant, as Mary guarded in her womb and pondered in her heart the life of her Son (cf. Lk 1:31; 2:19.51). Moreover, truth does not need loud cries to reach people’s hearts. God does not like declarations and shouting, gossiping and noise: rather, he prefers, as he did with Elijah, to speak in the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), in a “thread of resounding silence”. We too, then, like Abraham, like Elijah, like Mary, need to free ourselves from so much noise in order to hear his voice. For only in our silence does his word resound.

This reminds us that silence, in the ecclesial community, makes fraternal communication possible, where the Holy Spirit draws together points of view, because he is harmony. To be synodal is to welcome one another like this, in the knowledge that we all have something to share and to learn, gathering together to listen to the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17) in order to know what the Lord “is saying to the churches” (Rev 2:7). What is more, silence enables true discernment, through attentive listening to the Spirit’s “sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26) that echo, often hidden, within the People of God (Prayer Vigil, 30 September 2023).

We may have plenty of good ideas on how to reform the Church, but let us remember: to adore God and to love our brothers and sisters with his love, that is the great and perennial reform. To be a worshipping Church and a Church of service, washing the feet of wounded humanity, accompanying those who are frail, weak, and cast aside, going out lovingly to encounter the poor.

This, brother, and sisters, is the Church we are called to “dream”: a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters. A Church that never demands an attestation of “good behaviour,” but welcomes, serves, loves, and forgives. A Church with open doors that is a haven of mercy. “The merciful man”, said John Chrysostom, “is as a harbour to those who are in need; and the harbour receives all who are escaping shipwreck, and frees them from danger, whether they be evil or good; whatsoever kind of men they be (...), it receives them into its shelter. You also, when

*you see a man suffering shipwreck on land through poverty, do not sit in judgment on him, nor require explanations, but relieve his distress.” (In pauperem Lazarum, II, 5).
(...) The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel. (Homily, Conclusion of the Synod, 29 October 2023).*

Why do we so often discuss synodality? Because being Church and being a community of faith comes solely from Baptism, not from other affiliations, positions, responsibilities, or merits. In this we comprehend all the prophecy of Blessed Antonio Rosmini and its relevance in today's Church: only someone of profound and expert knowledge of the Church Fathers like him, only one who had discerned the signs of the times and the aspirations of the poor could have perceived then what the Church began to proclaim to everyone at the Second Vatican Council. We want to learn synodality, it is like saying we want to live Baptism. To learn synodality is to live Baptism!

The poor then become the protagonists of the Church's journey, those whom Jesus wanted close to him and to whom he drew near: let us listen to them, let us learn from them. But who are the poor? Let us begin with our community, with the poor one at my side, within the context in which we live. The 'poor' need to be accepted, recognised, and welcomed. We are the poor!

To make progress in its journey and its discernment, the Church - and we in it - truly needs to listen to 'the least' of these, and to do this we must go to them: that is why the Synod points us to pastoral and missionary conversion. And the dynamism of missionary communion is indicated by the word 'synod'.

We urgently need a synodal approach to formation: formation of brothers, sisters, ascribed, in the manner in which we understand and live our spirituality, the Gospel, our religious practices and our 'going to church'.

Young people want to be listened to and accompanied; it is necessary to live the process of interior listening to the Spirit, so much so that listening is not only the method, but also the content.

SYNODALITY: THE 'HOW'

Jesus himself asks: "To what can we compare the Kingdom of God, or with what parable can we describe it?" (Mk 4:30). To what can we compare: Synodality, the Church, our religious

and spiritual family with its own charism? "Either we see God in the things of the world, or we will never see him. Jesus saw his destiny represented in a seed that falls into the earth. Apparently a nothing, destined to rot... became bread for many. Destined to become Eucharist. Today, in a culture of the struggle for supremacy and the obsession for visibility, the Church is called to repeat the words of Jesus, to revive them in all their power (Synod, Synthesis Report, *A Synodal Church in Mission*).

The Holy Father has reminded us several times: *the Synod is about synodality and not about this or that theme... The important thing is how to do the reflection, that is, in a synodal manner.*

Yes, the solution is fraternity, as the Pope puts it in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*... it is the solution at the world level, in the family of peoples, and the method of synodality has a key function, from within the Church towards humanity, to go beyond 'a world of associates' (no. 101).

By its very dynamic, love demands a progressive openness, a greater capacity to welcome others, in a never-ending adventure that makes all peripheries converge towards a full sense of mutual belonging. Jesus told us: *You are all brothers* (Mt 23:8). (*Fratelli Tutti*, 95).

Jesus' life on earth takes place "on the periphery".

In the existential peripheries is Jesus' birth - 'there was no place for them in the inn', and his death - 'outside the holy city, Jerusalem "that you kill your own prophets"' (Mt 23:37), and his mission in Galilee to the Gentiles (Mt 12:15)... and then the mission of the Church, of Paul, of Francis, of Ignatius, of Francis Xavier, of Mother Teresa, of Charles de Foucauld etc, but also Benedict and Therese of Lisieux, until us today.

The existential peripheries of the heart, in its encounter with people: Zacchaeus, the adulterous woman, Matthew, the widowed mother, Simon of Cyrene, the thief on the cross.

From the existential peripheries He calls and attracts: the shepherds, the Magi along their journey, but also the temple guards, the soldiers, Herod himself...

He sends to the existential peripheries in the parables: the small things, the lost sheep (Mt 15:24), the simple moments of everyday life, the everyday situations that give meaning to everything.

If we see the method, not so much the content but the 'container', the grotto of Bethlehem, and its circumstances, and our own reality, and the treasure in clay pots (cf. 2 Cor 4:7), we can consider two characteristics that are part of the same reality: poverty and humility. According to the Gospel, one leads to the other. If we contemplate the 'how' of Bethlehem, the 'how' of the Incarnation, we see poverty, simplicity, silence, and humility - in the context and the persons of Mary, Joseph, and the baby.

Poverty. The Holy Father said to us in November (Union of Superiors General meeting): "without falling into pauperism, let poverty be poverty, mother and bulwark", recalling the Ignatian and Rosminian rule cf. Rule of Life, Common Rules 49, "we must love poverty as defending the wall of religious life, and observe it as fully as possible ..." and no. 50 "we must all love poverty as a mother, and when occasion offers, feel the effects of it...". Pope added: I would like stress poverty, the witness of poverty ... is the use of property for the benefit of the people of God. Does the vow of poverty prompt us religious to think about this? At least to discern in the order of welcome and hospitality, without automatically assuming that 'one cannot', to make our goods available to others, (...) through generous policies, identity, and networking to work together. In fact, the use of money is always a source of domination and there is a form of wealth that is united with the love of money, which is worldliness'.

Father Founder has a very clear and timely spirit-filled message for us in the Constitutions when he entitles the specific chapter on poverty as follows: *Poverty And Its Consequences*. "An unrestricted poverty -a paradox! - embraced in order to follow Christ" (cf. Const. 502). Indeed, a static poverty is just nice talk! As our ascribed member, Monsignor Antonio Staglianò told me, 'The aestheticization of Christianity has anaesthetised its message'. So it was with Christmas, with Bethlehem, with the cross! But the poor are really with us and sharing their lot means being with the poor, walking together with them, being witnesses of the Kingdom, promoting justice and peace, being builders of the civilisation of love and truth. Poverty and its consequences!

Humility truly is part of the method! I like the comparison of humility with the salt in food, dissolved and not visible, yet immediately noticeable if it is missing. If salt were to lose its taste... (Mt 5:13). The spiritual fathers, following Augustine would say that of humility the less we talk about it the better: it is a tool, part of the methodology. It is like saying that being in the Church, in the Synod, in religious life, happens solely through Baptism. This is our fundamental dignity, not anything else, but we don't have to repeat saying this.

The Pope told us, for example, with a beautiful expression referring to the moon, that "*machismo* is now in its last quarter" and that "clericalism must disappear". Humility is a great ingredient of our spirituality if we think that Antonio Rosmini, in the letters he wrote to illustrate, explain, or elaborate on the Institute, continually repeats that the 'tone' of this charism - the method - is littleness, humility, hiddenness.

A profoundly important passage for our charism in the Constitutions, is where Fr Founder before dealing with obedience places a chapter "on the humility of the elective state." He clearly states that without humility it is impossible to live the obedience proper to this Institute, and that this is as important as charity. Humility, therefore, means for us action, intense activity, preparation, working without tiring. The state of life chosen by us, contemplation, lives and feeds then on humility and simplicity. It is a condition attainable and liveable by all, without preferences or refusals, and it is part of our creatureliness.

Indeed, from the Synod we recognise that as never before in the world today, people in poverty are the protagonists of the Church's journey: from them comes joy, hope, trust. Let us be like them, like the One who was born in the grotto of Bethlehem!

You, the unwelcomed, make me welcoming,
You, the refugee, turn me into shelter,
You, child in need, make of me a gift,
Let me know your poverty, source of true wealth.
Let me live in your humility, the path of true love.

Let us acknowledge Synodality!

Let us acknowledge synodality in our daily lives, let us acknowledge it as an indispensable tool for living more humanely. The whole Church invites us, and this time not only its Pastors but all people, and the immense undertaking of consultation of small communities and their journey of listening who also came to Rome in October in the first phase of the Synod, and all that was summarised, synthesised and offered again for everyone's reflection, all this asks us to recognise synodality in our daily lives as Jesus did (cf. letter to the People of God), to recognise synodality in the very being of the Church. As St John Chrysostom put it: Church and Synod are synonymous.

I remember on Holy Saturday two years ago, I was visiting the brethren in England, and during a walk with Fr David Myers through the woods we arrived at the ancient parish church. There the chairs were placed in various circles, indicating that parishioners had been meeting on the Synod. I recall too my visits to Africa, where all the people responded to the slogan at the beginning of each meeting: synodality: communion, participation, mission; and in Vietnam at each Mass the prayer for the Synod was recited; and in India all the people prayed the *Adsumus* daily.

There is something intuitive that we can all recognise, there are daily realities inherent to our charism that are now quite easy to see, and thanks to the reflection of the entire Church, we can take them on effortlessly and say: this is the way, let's follow it!

I invite you to read the synthesis report of the Synod, and as it is suggested see what inspires us or what we really feel is important for us, that which we feel and discern we need to do. I have done this exercise, and I see priorities for us Rosminians because they are what we need, but also because they are options for following the Pope in the direction he is pointing for all God's people.

First of all, the three parts in which the synthesis is presented are very interesting: i) The Face of the Synodal Church; ii) All disciples, All missionaries; iii) Weaving bonds, building communities (www.synod.va). Each theme analyses points of convergence, issues to be addressed and proposals. Some insights from my reading:

From part one:

The poor, protagonists of the Church (n.4): *Being afforded recognition and respect are powerful ways of enabling personal capacities, so that each person needs to be enabled to determine their own means of growth rather than be the object of the welfare action of others. The preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith. (...) Poverty is not just of one kind (...) The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, include the unborn and their mothers. (...) our world also knows the forms of spiritual poverty. a synodal Church needs to put those experiencing poverty at the centre of all aspects of its life: through their sufferings, they have direct knowledge of the suffering Christ (cf. Evangelii gaudium, no. 198). The likeness of their lives to that of the Lord makes those who are poor heralds of a salvation received as a gift and witnesses to the joy of the Gospel.*

From part two:

All disciples, all missionaries: do not always remain only disciples, **the Church is mission (n. 8).** The theological deepening of the relationships between charisms and ministries in a missionary perspective is seen as an issue to be addressed.

women in the life and mission of the Church (n.9): *Jesus considered women his interlocutors...in Christ women and men are clothed with the same baptismal dignity and receive equally the variety of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:28). We are called together into a communion of loving, non-competitive relationships in Christ, and to a co-responsibility to be expressed at every level of the Church's life. (...) Women make up most of those in our pews and are often the first missionaries of the faith in the family. Consecrated women, both in contemplative and apostolic life, are a fundamental and distinctive gift, sign, and witness in our midst. (...) A profound spiritual conversion is needed as the foundation for any effective structural change. (...) Where dignity and justice are undermined in relationships between men and women in the Church, we weaken the credibility of our proclamation to the world. Our synodal path shows the need for relational renewal and structural changes.*

Consecrated life and lay associations and movements: a charismatic sign (n. 10): The Church's charismatic dimension is made manifest in the rich and varied forms of consecrated life. (...) Those in consecrated life have often been the first to sense important historical changes and to heed the promptings of the Spirit: Today, too, the Church needs their prophetic voice and action.

From the third part:

A synodal approach to formation (n. 14). *Every baptised person is called to take care of their own formation as a response to the gifts of the Lord, making use of the talents they have received in order that they bear fruit and put them at the service of all. (...) The way in which Jesus formed the disciples constitutes the model we need to follow. (...) From the Gospel we learn that formation is not only or primarily a strengthening of one's own abilities; it is a conversion to the 'logic' of the Kingdom that can render even defeats and failures fruitful. (...) the entire People of God being formed together as they journey together... We need, therefore, a thorough review of formation programmes, with particular attention to how we can foster the contribution of women and families to them. (the document mentions the term "formation" 56 times).*

Towards a listening and accompanying Church: Listen (n. 16). *The Church does this through listening given and received, to listen and to be listened to.*

Then we discover that 'the content' of the Synod is hope: hope in peace is now a matter of life and death, and above all a matter of love, and the Church makes us one with everyone.

The content of the Synod is the whole of humanity, which belongs to me because it belongs to God. The fruit of the synodal journey, that we as Rosminians and the Church need, include prophetic structures of synodality in order to work as a team, and to support the Church together. And participation in our communities, and in our apostolic work, so that we act in unity.

It is a Eucharistic Synodality. Christian prophecy is the testimony that Christ is present. Two questions emerge which we can talk about, guided by the Spirit, in our communities:

- What signs of hope do you see in our society, and in the Church?
- What particular places evoke and invoke hope?

The content of the Synod is hope. In Meeting with the Theological Commission, the Holy Father (30 November 2023), in addition to asking them to help him "de-masculinize" the Church, told them that "today we are called to devote ourselves with all energy of heart and mind to a "missionary conversion of the Church" (EG 30) (...) "making a synodal Church a reality is an indispensable precondition for a new missionary energy that will involve the entire People of God": a missionary energy that is able to communicate the beauty of the faith". And again: " "we need a way of thinking that knows how to convincingly present a God who loves, who forgives, who saves, who liberates, who promotes people and summons them to fraternal service". The Pope recalls two current challenges, the greatest of humanity today: the anthropological question - migrant laws, human trafficking, gender, new dictatorships and wars, genetic manipulation - and the ecological question. He also noted that coinciding with the Holy Year 2025, will also be the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, whose Trinitarian and Christological faith is to be relaunched for three reasons:

a **spiritual motive**: *to spread new and surprising glimmers of Christ's eternal light in the house of the Church and in the darkness of the world.*

a **synodal reason**: synodality is the way to translate into attitudes of communion and processes of participation the trinitarian dynamic with which God, through Christ and the breath of the Holy Spirit, comes towards humanity. (...) *unleashing the richness of this wonderful "humanizing energy".*

an **ecumenical reason**: *in 2025, providentially, the date of Easter will coincide for all Christian denominations. How beautiful it would be if this marked the concrete start of a common celebration of Easter!*

Let us learn Synodality!

We definitely need to learn synodality. Having a purpose, a goal and a journey with the Lord, is the only way to be a mystic in action, the awareness that we are on a journey and that we are not finished, but everything is part of a process of growth, of maturity, of holiness towards the fullness of Christ. We need to listen effectively and from the heart. The way to live being church together is the synodal style: this is put into practice by discernment in the Spirit and conversation in the Spirit.

Discernment in the Spirit. The synodal approach helps us to know and do God's will; it is transformation through deep listening and conversion. We are called as a people to the same hope. Problems, difficulties, and challenges are also part of discernment between consolations and desolations, like the people in the desert of the Exodus. Pope Francis has been teaching us the method of discernment; he even dedicated a cycle of Wednesday catechesis to it (14 catecheses, between August 2022 and January 2023). The attitude of a Christian who desires to know God's will in order to live it fully and responsibly, is to please God in all things, to cooperate with Christ and follow him, to *see God in all things and all things in God, according to his most holy will* (cf. Memorial I prob.).

Conversation in the Spirit. This forms part of the school of the heart, and helps us to recognise what the Spirit is saying to the Church, and to us. It is a simple way to make room for true listening, to be aware of what one has actually heard and to distil that word which might point the way. We are talking then not about the prevalence of one's own reasons, not about pre-preparing one's own answer, not about opinion or the winning idea, but the discernment which that allows me to respect my brother's proposal. It is a way of being Church together! Here are some elements of the synodal style:

- i) The importance of following a methodology that involves everyone (the 'how').
- ii) Continuity with the vision of the Second Vatican Council: we are all part of the people of God.
- iii) The power of the messenger allows more people to move forward.

- iv) Through synodality, a deeper communion is experienced.
- v) Synodality bears fruit.
- vi) Synodality builds discernment and consensus.
- vii) It renews the art of conversation: the conversion of hearts in the exercise of spiritual conversation.

Synodality is learned by putting it into practice. As with the eight hundred years of the Rule of St Francis of Assisi (Pope Honorius III, 29 November 1223), the recommendation has been to take the Gospel without too many interpretations or mediations (*sine glossa*): rather, try to incarnate it in your own life, just as He spoke to you, in fraternity, simplicity and joy: in conversion of heart.

THERE IS A PROVIDENCE!

As he came out of the inn at which he had rested, to proceed on his journey, he saw, lying near the door, two women: the one was elderly, and the other more youthful, with an infant in her arms, which was in vain seeking sustenance from its exhausted mother; both were of the complexion of death: by them stood a man, whose countenance and limbs gave signs of former vigour; now lost from long inanition. All three stretched forth their hands but spoke not—what prayer could be so moving as their appearance. Renzo sighed; "There is a Providence," said he, as he placed in the nearest hand the last remnant of his wealth. He put it into the hand that felt closest and resumed his way.

The slight repast he had made, and the good deed he had performed (for we are composed of body and soul), had equally tended to refresh, and invigorate him. Certainly, having thus disposed of the last of his money, he had more confidence for the future than if he had found ten times as much. If, to afford relief to these unhappy persons, on that day Providence had kept in reserve the last farthing of a stranger, a fugitive, uncertain also of how he would live, who could believe that she would then leave in the lurch the one whose help she had used for this, and to whom she had given such a lively, effective and resolute feeling of herself?

I wanted to quote here above a passage taken from the great novel "I promessi Sposi" (The Betrothed) by Alessandro Manzoni, a great friend of Antonio Rosmini. Indeed, it seems that his friendship, conversations, and dialogues with don Antonio were a journey towards the light for Alessandro, in recognising Providence in his own life, its actual working for us. This personal and interior transformation was also reflected in his writings.

Let us also contemplate together the action of Providence in our daily lives, and not just the good we receive from Providence but also the incentive to do good. This has been my experience this year together with other brothers and sisters. I have understood the greatness of Providence towards us as the Rosminian family in some situations, and it has given me much consolation to feel that God's goodness, his Providence accompanies me, arrives at the right

time, takes care of me and us, and never abandons us, "whose eye never closes on human affairs".

At times it is impossible not to notice or be distracted by it, Providence is overflowing. God is there, and you can touch him in his goodness and care towards you. Like Renzo in the novel, you feel that you must respond to so much goodness, that you must learn from so much generosity, you feel that you have to become better, more generous, more caring, more understanding, more kind, more welcoming.

Providence was overflowing, exaggerated with us in Vietnam! There I encountered it, in generosity, in service, in the helpfulness of the people. It was Providence that accompanied and guided us; without its indications of goodness and love the time would have been simply a first contact. Instead, amazed, and astonished, we were led to the heart of communities that live the faith and bear witness to it, that invited us with them to respond to the goodness of the Lord.

The eyes are as if transformed, there is no time to spare, there is much to do, like Renzo I can know that I am an instrument of Providence for others, I 'become' a mission, Providence transforms me.

Providence guides all of us, the call is to the whole Institute, not only to welcome but to make that new culture, that language, that way of living the Gospel our own. It is the call to all of us as a Congregation to widen our tents (Is 54:2 synodality) and speak new languages (Acts 2:4 Pentecost) to go with Christ and the Church. The Vietnamese people, the Ugandan people, those of this or that country become my people, and I or you, as Rosminians, become part of the response to the Lord's call to the Institute. We are missionaries in the ever-new language of love.

Fr. Founder rejoices, as in a hymn to Providence, in the letter also quoted in the homily at the Mass of his Beatification. The moment of acute suffering for his work as a philosopher and theologian in the service of the Church, gives him more occasion to recognise Providence: *"... When I meditate on these things, I wonder at them; and as I wonder, I love; loving them, I celebrate them; celebrating them I give thanks; and thanking God, I am full of happiness. And how else could I act, since I know both by reason and by faith, and feel deep within my spirit, that everything God does, or wishes, or allows, is done by an eternal, an infinite, an essential love? And who could be grieved by love?"* (16 September 1849, to Don Michele Parma)

And you, have you met Providence? Tell me when it came to you! Did Providence catch you, as it caught Antonio Rosmini, Madre Giovanna, Bishop Arthurs, Fr. Steven?

PRAY YOUR PSALM OF THANKSGIVING!

I invite you to take time during these days to contemplate the year that is coming to an end in the light of Providence, in a spirit of faith, prayer and abandonment into the hands

of the Lord. Write your own psalm of thanksgiving to the Lord, dedicate a time of silence and adoration, recognise the beautiful things even in the hidden folds of so many days that all may have seemed the same. Have you not seen how the city has awakened with light? Did you not notice that at the last moment everything was resolved? Are you not happy because while everyone was in fear, you were in peace? Do you not remember the consolation you received in adoration at the Eucharist at that moment of sorrow? You prayed so much for that sick person; do you not realise that the Lord really helped you? Why do you complain all the time, do you not see that those were small things? Pray your psalm of thanksgiving! Perhaps you will write just one line, just one word, but pray your Psalm.

New 'things'

News, new situations, what renews us in fidelity, in youthfulness, in synodality, in response to the Gospel is made person -Providence- in our brothers and sisters, and it is renewed by the personal response to the Lord's call, by the communal response to serve. New things are given by new people, new people make new times. And, so here is a Psalm of thanksgiving as a Rosminian family.

We thank the Lord for the sisters who made their first profession and perpetual profession among the Rosminian Sisters of Providence, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Usambara, and for the brothers and sisters living their discipleship in the Fuente Real Family, for the young men and women in discernment, and for the postulants and novices.

We thank the Lord for the seven brothers who professed their Perpetual and Coadjutor Vows last 18th November in Rome: Andrea Adelardi, Reagan Otieno, Daniel Thannickal, Simon McKenzie, Michel Collu, Joseph Tembo, and Henry Mutune.

We thank the Lord for this year's new priests: Anselmo Mammadov and Camille Temon on 10th June in Novara; William Milanasio on 18th June in Montecompatri; John Mulevu on 24th June in Machakos; Severine Kilala and Damian Lyakurwa on 27th July in Moshi; and Mathias Misibo on 15th August in Tabora.

We include too in our Psalm of thanksgiving the new deacon Binix Mathew ordained on 18th December in India; and our prayer of praise for the future priests at the beginning of 2024, Abin Bright on 6th January and Jith Francis on 16th January.

Our Psalm of Gratitude goes also for the young people and all those who, in contact with Rosminian spirituality, feel the desire to live it in their own lives in the service of the Church, as committed lay people, ascribed men and women, consecrated men and women religious.

The happy anniversaries of religious life, we name with a beautiful expression, according to the ancient Church fathers, the anniversaries of 'Common Life':

80th anniversary, Giuseppe Giovannini.

70th anniversary: Giuseppe Bonacina, Tarcisio De Tomasi, James McAteer.

65th anniversary: William Jackson, Brian Cuddihy, David Myers, David Tobin, Michael Hegarty, James Gordon.

60th anniversary: Mario Adobati and Robert Belwood.

40th anniversary, Claudio Papa.

25th anniversary: Francis Shayo, Henry Konnoth, Sunny Kalathil.

The anniversaries of priestly ordination, '*ad multos annos*':

70th anniversary, John Buckner

60th anniversary: Balduino Moscatelli, James McAteer, Frank Quinn

55th anniversary: Andrea Bellebono, Philip Scanlan, James Gordon.

50th anniversary: Eduino Menestrina, David Tobin, Simon Giles

25th anniversary Pierluigi Giroli.

10th anniversary: Fulgence Oisso, Richard Mwanzia, Yovani Salas, Frank Blanco, Jose Kuttikkatt, Robin Koyikkatil, Shaju Bernard, Baghyaraj Muvvala, Shijo Jose Ayyamala, and Fivins Chittilappilly

The gift of time

Let us cultivate the consciousness that the greatest gift is time, with a heart full of gratitude to God, not as those who feel better than others, as those who have gained points or those who have made it to live longer or live better. With true gratitude we thank the Lord for the times we have gone to confession during this year, and for the Eucharist we have received and celebrated each day, for the sacraments we priests have administered, and for what we have been able to do in the service of our brothers and sisters, obedient to his Word and at the same time feeling that we are in his hands.

How could we also not remember with gratitude to the Lord the sisters and the brothers, family members and friends that He called to his House during this year: their life, a gift of Providence.

The greatest gift is the gift of time, it has value for the moment I am living, and it does not matter if I live eighty or a hundred years, to have known this day, this moment, to live full of gratitude for this gift, this is enough for me!

Time is an infinite gift and God being born in time gives us eternity. He who is the Eternal Day came into our little day and transformed it with light, says Augustine, a reality to be experienced daily. I invite you again to do so with your psalm of thanksgiving at this end of the year. Pope Francis announces to us in *Evangelii Gaudium* that time is superior to space, it is a greater gift because it puts us in direct contact with God!

Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them, and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity. (Evangelii Gaudium 223)

Just as ... unity prevails over conflict, reality is more important than the idea, and the whole is greater than the part (cf. EG 222-237). We contemplate in the mystery of the Incarnate Word, the humanity of Jesus, and in that mystery, we contemplate our life and its value in the world. It is a matter of maintaining and following a broader and deeper vision, what St Paul refers to as the infinite dimensions of charity (cf. Eph 3:17-19).

St Francis in a simpler way 800 years ago had just returned from the Holy Land and the landscape around Greccio reminded him so much of Bethlehem, that *voila* the first nativity scene was created! What did it mean for Francis to depict the birth of Jesus live? Is it not to arrive at praising the Creator and recognising His presence in his life? And for us who contemplate the crib thinking of the war in the Holy Land, in the Bethlehem of today? What can we do from our daily cribs?

Let us sing the psalm of thanksgiving! Sing and walk! And if we say that times are bad, let us listen to what Ambrose of Milan says: "You think: times are bad, times are tough, times are difficult. Live well and you will change the times". In fact, "We are the times", says Augustine.

Again, before we say goodbye and wish each other well on the Holy Night, before we embrace each other in the New Year, a few words of synodality. These are words of everyday life, slogans we hear: we want to turn them into words of Christian wisdom, we want the light of our witness to be projected onto them, we want to see how they are incarnated in our lives.

What consequences do these slogans have for us? How do they shape our relationship with God in prayer and with our brothers and sisters? Like these words of synodality, and many more like them:

- *I love surprises, don't you?*
- *It is not an era of change, but a change of an era.*
- *Let us be regenerated in Jesus.*
- *From the beginning He asks you once, twice, three times, always: "Do you love me?"*
- *My hope lies in what I experience today.*
- *My hope is in Mary's womb, now in Bethlehem, then on the roads of Galilee - I go with him - then on the cross...*

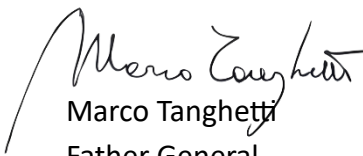
Thus, we cry out at the grotto in Bethlehem, or within ourselves at the door of the heart, or with bare feet in the desert of the soul of so many sufferings before this burning bush:

You who make yourself a child,
help me to be small!
You who are the Word,
help me listen!
You who are the Word Incarnate,
help me communicate!
Thou who art Son:
make me recognise the Father's Love!

And every morning or every evening, recognising the immense Love that God has for you, contemplating the goodness of God's Providence that always accompanies you, listen to these four words that Gabriel announced to Mary, and let them be your path as a believer in hope (Union of Superiors General, testimony of Fr. Miguel Marquez ocd):

Rejoice
Don't be afraid.
The Holy Spirit will come upon you.
For nothing is impossible to God!

Best wishes, for a Happy Christmas, and a Joyous 2024,
Be a missionary, as Mary is!



Marco Tanghetti
Father General

Rome, Christmas of the Lord 2023

"(...) to refocus our gaze on God, to be a Church that looks mercifully at humanity. A Church that is united and fraternal – or at least seeks to be united and fraternal –, that listens and dialogues; a Church that blesses and encourages, that helps those who seek the Lord, that lovingly stirs up the indifferent, that opens paths to draw people into the beauty of faith. A Church that has God at its centre and, therefore, is not divided internally and is never harsh externally. A Church that takes a risk in following Jesus. This is how Jesus wants the Church, his Bride, to be. (...) A Church that "makes itself a conversation" (Lett. enc. *Ecclesiam suam*, n. 67).

A Church "with a gentle yoke" (cf. *Mt* 11:30), which does not impose burdens, and which repeats to everyone: "Come, you who are weary and oppressed, come, you who have lost your way or feel far away, come, you who have closed the doors to hope: the Church is here for you!" The doors of the Church are open to everyone, everyone, everyone!

Francis,

homily Mass at the beginning of the Synod, 4 October 2023

A heartfelt thanks to my friend Carlo Carlini, for having illustrated the cover of the letter with the evocative image of the Holy Father in front of the Crib, in the wheelchair. We shall see "how" and "where" the Church should go today, imitating Saint Francis.