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Audience with participants in the meetings organized by the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus and the Daughters of Divine Zeal

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the meetings organized by the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus and the Daughters of Divine Zeal.

The following is the Pope's address to the participants in the course:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to meet you at a moment in which you are reflecting and working on your congregational paths, in the light of the General Chapters, both elective.

You have been able to consider themes such as consecration, charismatic identity, fraternal community and mission, fundamental aspects of religious life, the deepening of which requires the ability to listen and discern, in prayer and sharing; it also requires a good dose of courage, to continue to be faithful today to the original inspiration of Saint Hannibal of France and at the same time attentive to the needs of a changing world. There would be many things to say about these issues, but today I would like to reflect with you on just one point, which lies at the root of your specific mission in the Church and which also constitutes your fourth vow: the Rogate, the prayer for vocations.

Prayer is the connecting thread that runs through the life of Saint Hannibal. His own vocation – “unexpected, irresistible, very sure”, as he testifies – appears clearly to him while in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. There he has the enlightenment of the “intelligence of the Rogate”. Indeed, when one places oneself, docile and humble, before God, often one received a specific understanding of the meaning of one's own life: it is in faithful and unwavering prayer, in particular in Adoration, that every assumes harmony, that one grasps more clearly one's aims, finding in the Lord the strength and the light to put them into practice according to his plans. The

Saint said: "Without this inner fire, that is called spiritual life, oration, prayer, penance ... no truly good work can be produced" (Saint Hannibal Marie de France, funeral eulogy for Archbishop Francesco Paolo Carrano). This was his experience, but it applies to everyone: without prayer one cannot remain standing and one does not know where to go.

It is therefore important that there be a prolonged dialogue with the Lord every day, and then an invocation to him before every important moment, every meeting, every decision.

Saint Hannibal was inspired by a particular passage in the Gospel, where Jesus says: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (*Mt* 9:37-38). This passage filled his heart with zeal. In the Messina of his time, beginning with the poverty of the "Case Avignone" neighbourhood, and then going further afield, with a broader outlook and ever wider action, he too felt, like Jesus, a poignant compassion for humanity poor in body and spirit. And he realized that the first thing to do was to pray, certainly not to persuade God to send shepherds, as if he did not care about his people, but to allow himself to be ever more overwhelmed by the viscerality of his paternal and maternal love: to learn, by praying, to be sensitive to the needs of his children! Thus, from prayer, the soul of all the apostolic and charitable activity of the Founder, your Congregations were born, first the Daughters of Divine Zeal and then the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus. You were born from the joined hands of a saint, who consecrated you to Christ with his prayer.

One day Saint Paul VI issued you an invitation, which said: "Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, whose very name qualifies you in the mission and in the image of worshippers and supplicants for the highest and most beautiful mission, to merit and prepare vocations for the Kingdom of Christ ... Be "specialists of God" (Address to the General Chapter of Carmelites of the Ancient Observance, of the Augustinian Recollects and the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, 14 September 1968). I would like to renew the invitation to you: be specialists in God, not so much as scholars of techniques, statistics and theories, however useful these may be, but rather in that wisdom that ripens first of all by forming "callouses on the knees" and then "on the hands". Be specialists, that is, in the arts of prayer and of charity: hands joined before God and hands outstretched towards your brothers. For even today the Lord is calling, and many young people are in need of credible witnesses and guides who, by showing them the beauty of a life spent for love, help them to say "yes".

Dear sisters, dear brothers, thank you for what you do, thank you for your witness. Thank you for your joined hands – not glued together, no, because then they need to go and work – but joined. Continue, please, to pray for vocations. And do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
