



03/04/2024

Octave of Easter

Visit to the United States of America

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet all the members of the Rosminian Family: the Institute of Charity, the Rosminian Sisters of Providence, Ascribed and Consecrated Ascribed, Adopted Sons and Daughters, Sisters of Our Lady of Usambara, brothers and sisters of the Fuente Real Family, Principals, Teachers and Staff of our Schools, Staff of our parishes and Centres, and Friends.

It is my joy to share with you something of my recent visit to the USA. Some might ask, why does the Father General write to all of us about his visit to a small region of Order? The answer is simple. As a Religious Family, every part of us is equally appreciated. We are all united as one, and so we all have both a care and a responsibility for each of the Provinces and every part of our international Religious Family.

1. The Paschal Mystery: an embrace of the past, present and the future

I am writing this letter during the Easter Octave, when our reliving of the culminating events of Our Lord's life are still fresh in our memory.

Our annual celebration of the sacred Triduum is of course not just an exercise in memory. It is a vital way to strengthen our life in Christ today. That same 'paschal pattern' – looking back on history and looking forward to the reinvigoration of mission – was very much part of my experience in the US.

The history of the Institute of Charity in the USA is a mission of 160 years. We never have been as large or widespread as many Orders in the US, but undoubtedly our humble contribution to the life of the Church in that country has been fruitful and incisive.

Indeed Fr. Costa, the first Rosminian to set foot in the United States (in 1864), was described as nothing less than an Apostle of Illinois. His missionary zeal was exemplary. And many other brethren have toiled over the years in the vineyard of the Lord in the United States with great diligence and with great affection for the people. If Fr. Costa were considered an Apostle of Illinois, why should not our brethren currently in the States aim to be Apostles of Florida for today!

The Church in the United States is distinct in remarkable ways. What impressed me is the strong sense of ecclesial community, the unity of the families, the active pastoral care and generous outreach programmes, the many and varied parish groups, the warmth of the hispanic families etc. And the parishes where we serve, are also blessed with vibrant and growing groups of the Ascribed.

Such vitality requires a selfless ministry from our brethren. Discernment guides us to eschew any kind of 'maintenance ministry' and instead to respond to Jesus' call today for missionary disciples of love: for his Church, for his parishes, for his people - not "mine" but "his". In this regard I was pleased to see that our mission in the US is growing: parishes, prison chaplaincy, and more recently school teaching too. This is an encouraging sign of our readiness to respond to the widening calls for our ministry of universal charity. Our growing appreciation of Father Founder's vision of a Religious Family also helps us to remain flexible and responsive to new pastoral situations and challenges. I can see many opportunities emerging for St Francis of Assisi Parish Seffner, Blessed Sacrament Parish Seminole, and Saint Teresa Parish Spring Hill, to work together as a family of parishes. With the Ascribed, with young people, with service projects (not forgetting the dear families of our Venezuela Province), with on-going formation programmes, with talks etc, we can be so much more effective if we work together as a team.

2. Charism, Identity, Community and Mission

The Assembly of the US region of the Irish-American Province was a particularly important part of my visit to the States. To spend time together - gathering for Holy Mass, sharing, reflecting and discerning - is vital for our spiritual well-being and a renewed sense of mission: unless the Lord builds the house, we labour in vain (cf. *Psalms* 127:1).

In keeping with the 'paschal pattern' of revisiting foundations and looking to the future, four foundational elements of our Religious Life – Charism, Identity, Community and Mission – were discussed at length during the Assembly. Each element is inseparable from the other three, and so the strengths and weaknesses of each one of these aspects of our life is reflected in the others too.

I was heartened by the recognition that our strength for mission has its foundation in our community life – spiritual, fraternal, formational, and social too. Without this, as the brethren all recognised, we very quickly lose our identity: our charism becomes vague or swamped by other factors, and our mission of universal charity can become restricted or lost in bureaucracy and managerial approaches to pastoral care.

Yes, we all need to refresh the foundations of our Religious Life, and perhaps this is particularly the case where our communities are few in number. If our specific Charism is not shaping our works, we are soon reduced to following our individual wishes or interests, or following the particular wishes or interests of someone else. It is of great benefit then for each one of us to ask ourselves from time to time: who do people say I am? Who do people say we Rosminians are? (cf. *Matthew* 16:15).

3. Companions in Charity - monthly gatherings, the interior life, and our mutual care:

Our very existence depends upon and is ordered to "mutual help and encouragement". It is this love and care for each other that helps us to grow in holiness or perfection and thus grow in our "ardent desire to live as disciples of Jesus" (*Constitutions*, 2). Elsewhere in the *Constitutions*, Father Founder puts it in this simple yet beautiful way: live as 'companions in

charity' (cf. *Constitutions* 551; On-going Formation, Rosminian Family Pastoral Year 2023-2024, Pamphlet no. 4).

I was therefore again encouraged by the decision made at the Assembly to reignite the monthly regional gatherings. This commitment to each other undoubtedly will bear much fruit: for the brethren themselves, for anyone newly assigned to the region, for scholastics who may be assigned to the USA for pastoral placement, and for eventual candidates.

We have other 'tools' as well to nurture the gifts of our charism within us. All we need do, is put them into practice. Daily meditation, silence before the Eucharist, spiritual reading (how simple and refreshing it is to read and meditate on Pope Francis' homilies and talks), common times of prayer (cf. RL 91), the annual retreat, careful reading and reflection on the On-Going Formation pamphlets and guides for the Rosminian Family etc, these all give us the ability to have a discerning approach and a Rosminian attitude or heart towards ourselves, the local community and the good of the Institute as a whole (cf. *Major Superiors Meeting* 2023, nos17-19).

4. Pastoral Ministry of Vocations Promotion

No Assembly is complete without serious attention being given to the question of Vocations. I am grateful for the enthusiasm with which the brethren in the US embraced this aspect of our witness as Religious. It is indeed a priority commitment of the universal Church to accompany young people in discerning their future and to guide their emerging inclinations of vocation to mission, to consecrated life, to the priesthood, to life understood as a vocation to holiness. I strongly believe that the Institute of Charity must radically enliven its contribution to this duty (cf 2023 *Major Superiors Meeting* document, no. 39). The Holy Father encourages us very clearly in this direction: "If we are indeed convinced that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, we can once more 'cast out the nets' in the Lord's name, with complete confidence. We can dare, as we should, to tell each young person to ask whether this is the path that they are meant to follow" (*Christus vivit*, 274.)

I am convinced that Vocations exist among our three parishes in Florida and beyond. It is our duty, for the Church and society, to proclaim our life and humbly yet diligently identify and accompany those individuals whom the

Lord is calling. There are many opportunities we can take to refer to Rosmini, and to the life and work of the Institute, in homilies, in our parish bulletins and websites, and when visiting families etc.

During the Assembly, the brethren in the United States identified many attractive distinguishing aspects of our Rosminian life: we are few in number yet we try to give our all (universal love; the story of the widow's mite), we are organized into Provinces yet can be called to serve in any part of the world (indifference/availability; second maxim), our charism is appealing and engaging when explained, we complement diocesan life we never compete with it, we are small yet strong, we really know each other well, we feel we are a Family etc.

I acknowledge that contemporary accessible resources are needed as we grow in confidence of proposing and introducing our Vocation to young people. I would welcome any suggestion or requests in this regard. The Church, as with society in the US, like in so many other places, is becoming increasingly multicultural and so we too must grow in our ability to undertake vocations ministry in Spanish and Vietnamese etc. as well as English.

As discussed, there are at least three aspects to vocations promotion: the prayers and vocational awareness of *all parishioners*; the relational aspect of accompaniment by *individual brethren* of someone open to the exploration of a vocation; and the offering of an event or gathering by *the Institute*. I have asked Fr Rick, Fr Bibin and Fr Alfred to explore the possibility of an event, with the prayers, encouragement and support of all. Support too for such an initiative can come from the Curia and our International Houses of Formation. As noted, eventual Postulants will be welcomed to the Seminole community and Novitiate will take place at the Inter-provincial Novitiate in Rome.

May everyone in the Rosminian Family add our Alleluia to Fr Bibin's catchphrase: 'each one catch one' in the USA!

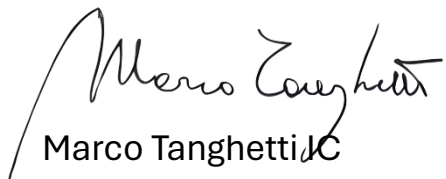
5. Conclusion

It was uplifting for me to experience a very evident spirit of appreciation and joy among the parishioners and friends of our Rosminian Family in the US. Something of the brethren is reflected in the faces of the individuals and

families they serve. This is truly a gift; a gift which has been borne of the loving commitment to our Institute and our call to serve through humility, availability, and charity; a gift which gives us confidence to move ahead in hope; a gift for which we can all give thanks to the Lord.

Fr Joe, the Provincial of the Irish-American Province, and Fr Rick, as Provost in USA, I thank in particular for their organization of our most fruitful time together, including the initial participation in the inspiring Los Angeles Archdiocese Education Congress. I also thank all the brethren for their generous hospitality and lively participation at our Assembly. Fr Paul, I am sorry was ill with Covid during our Assembly but he was included in our Masses and prayers. Fr Gordon, I thank for his decades of dedicated service and for his current ministry of prayer and humour in his senior years. Mons Charles, Fr Geoffrey and Reinaldo and Glenda, also join me in thanking the various parish staff and parishioners whose outstanding generosity and hospitality was much appreciated by us all.

Fraternally yours in the light of the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marco Tanghetti'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Marco Tanghetti

Superior General.



PARISH



SCHOOL



FAMILY

USA visit 2024



BROTHERHOOD



ASSEMBLY







