

•\• Year of Fr. Etchecopar •/\•



# *Father Etchecopar, man of love*

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## **Introduction : Immersed in a movement of charity**

*“And the greatest of them is love”* (1 Cor 13,13). The Christian virtue consists in living with love which is a gift of God. Everything starts with the gift God makes for us when he creates us, and goes on with an experience of meeting the Person of Jesus, which is the experience of the love God communicates to us through the life of his son, the Incarnate Word. *“We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.”* (1Jn 4,16). This love is a communication « from the loving person to the loved one, of what she has or can give ; the loved one acts in the same way in front of the loving person (love consists in interchange between the two parties ; that is to say in the lover’s giving and communicating to the beloved what he has or out of what he has or can ; and so, on the contrary, the beloved to the lover.) (Sp. Ex.231). We experience God’s love through all the gifts, favours and blessings he grants us every day, which gives us the opportunity of *“seeking his presence, hearing his word, welcoming his love”* (RL.71).

This love demands a generous answer from us, not according to its measure, but to ours, that of our poverty and weakness. We can only give

him what we have received from him. But we love him when we answer what he gave us and, by making his will, we answer all the challenges of life with a spirit of open-heartedness, accepting to be disturbed by them.

*“Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh. You must love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let the words I enjoin on you today stay in your heart. You shall tell them to your children, and keep on telling them, when you are sitting at home, when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are standing up.” (Dt 6, 4-7)*

Our love does not only shows itself in praying, but also when in all the situations and relations of our life, we maintain ourselves « *in a filial attitude of adoration, praise, and offering, but also to seek the will and wishes of the Father* ». (RL.74)

The virtue of charity has three movements:

1. God has the initiative of loving us by creating us, by calling us to meet him and in all the favours he gives us, searching our integral good. It is God's love.
2. Each man who has met him and benefitted from his love answers him by a love which consists in making his will : by acknowledging him as Creator and Lord, by adoring him, praising him and offering him everything he is, knows, owns or can do. It is the love for God.
3. The authentic love for God is related to the true love for the neighbour. It is the love for the brother, *“each man is my brother”* because he is a Son of God like me. *“This is the proof of love, that he laid down his life for us, and we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone is well-off in worldly possessions and sees his brother in need but closes his heart to him, how can the love of God be remaining in him? Children, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine.” (1Jn 3, 16-18).*

These three dimensions of love – God’s love, love for God and fraternal love because, like me, he is God’s Son – we meet them in Fr. Etchecopar’s writings and life.

## I. Fr. Etchecopar drinks to the source of love of Fr. Garicoïts

### 1. *The double law of love and obedience*

Fr. Etchecopar inherited from Fr. Garicoïts the spirituality of love. Fr. Garicoïts speaks to us of both laws : the law of love always goes hand in hand with the law of obedience. It is a way of distinguishing in the whole (the evangelic law) its different parts : in its interior dimension, that of love; in its exterior dimension, that of obedience. Love and obedience are the fundamental dimensions of the Betharramite spirit.

Love expresses itself in obedience, and obedience must be « *out of love rather than any other motive* ». Fr. Etchecopar quotes these three texts of Fr. Garicoïts, which are the base of all his reflection about Love: in his letter to the Fathers and Brothers of America, written from Betharram on December 4th 1881, Fr. Etchecopar copies integrally two letters, one of which is found in Saint Michel Garicoïts’ correspondance, tome II, letter 293. For him, this letter contains the main elements of the charism, taking into account the importance Fr. Garicoïts gives them by saying that this point 1° is repeated in the following ones (2nd, 3rd ...) till the 100th, a way of asserting that here resides Christian life.

In this letter, Fr. Garicoïts indicates three steps to do : **self-renouncement, surrender to the laws of love and obedience, following our Lord’s example, as well as overcoming all kinds of difficulties**. It is one of the ways of explaining the sequela process asked by Jesus in the Gospel : “*He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, **let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me**. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who*

loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mk 8, 34-35) Fr. Garicoïts says that one imitates or follows Christ in surrender as well as in both love and obedience laws, because himself has lived them in this way. It is a paschal spirit of death and resurrection lived by Jesus himself throughout his life. And Fr. Garicoïts supports his argument by two quotations : “The spirit of the Lord on me” (Lk 4,18) and “but he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...” (Ph 2, 7-8).

*At the beginning of this new year, I feel more and more the need to recommend that you insist with your teachers on the following points:*

*1. On the solid foundation of self-denial, and progress in virtue, which must precede and accompany both the study of literature and the manner of using it.*

*Without this foundation, all good scholarship and good grades only produce a vain brilliance... ruins.*

*It cannot be otherwise. **God from whom all good proceeds, asks for instruments stripped of everything, above all of themselves, entirely abandoned, in their hearts, to the action of the Holy Spirit, to the law of love and charity which he was pleased to engrave there, and to the great law of obedience, imitating under this double Our Lord Jesus-Christ: Spiritus Domini super me, propter quod unxit me. (the spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me... Luke 4.18) Factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem Crucis (He became obedient unto death even death on a cross... Philippians 2:8).***

*Under pain of denying our Profession of Auxiliary Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and placing ourselves under the standard of Satan, **we must in all our deliberate conduct respond to the Holy Spirit and to our Superiors:***

***Here I am ! out of love for the will of my God, without delay, without reserve and without return! Taking great care to give ourselves over to all the means that the good God and the Superiors will deem appropriate to employ, to redress the deviations of our indeliberate conduct.***

*[...]*

2°, 3°, 4°, 100°, *idem, idem, idem. Ecce Venio, fiat voluntas tua in me, sicut in Cælo (H butere I am may your will be done in me as in heaven!]*”

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 12/4/1881.  
Cf. Circular Letter, Betharram, 1/10/1888)

In the circular letter written from Betharram on 16/1/1887, Fr. Etchecopar writes the obituary notice of Fr. Rocq. In the middle of his panegyric, he says that the Betharramites' death should be like that of Saint Michael Garicoïts. Once more he quotes, in this case, an extract similar to the extract of the letter above, though it does not coincide word for word, except at the beginning and in some parts. In this quotation of Fr. Garicoïts, we also notice the importance of the grace coming from God and that of the position where you find yourself, elements which are also essential to Fr. Garicoïts' spirituality. The presentation is original : he repeats the word « **men** » four times, to present the characteristics of the Betharramite spirit. In particular, he is referring to surrender and to both laws of love and obedience, and presents them as features of our Founder, in his life as well as in his death:

*May we all benefit from the lessons of such an edifying end and deserve the grace of a most holy death by this perfect oblation of all ourselves represented by the gifts of the Magi and which our venerable Founder constantly recommended to us. He wanted, in fact, that each of our acts should offer to the divine Majesty a combination of love and austerity and profound humility. He could approve neither of a love without mortification nor of a zeal apart from humble prayer. “**God,**” he repeated, “**from whom all good proceeds, asks above all for men stripped of everything and principally of themselves, delivered inwardly to the law of love and outwardly into the hands of their Superiors; self-effacing and devoted men who, in the path of obedience, never retreat, and always advance, recognizing and confessing their nothingness; men who exercise the greatest love in the humblest positions; men who, everywhere and always, respond to***

*the full extent of divine grace and to all the duties of their ministry, but never go beyond this grace or exceed the boundaries of their position”.*

*These principles, this doctrine, were hallowed by his life; he sealed them by his death.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 1/16/1887)

Fr. Etchecopar once more quotes a text by Fr. Garicoïts which contains the three elements indicated above : surrender, love and obedience law, as well as following Jesus (There I am with your Divine Son). We find them in the letter in which he makes a paschal presentation of Fr. Garicoïts, taking up the words addressed by Jesus to the disillusioned disciples walking with him to Emmaüs : *“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?”* (Lk 24,26). He underlines it like a prayer.

*Here, it was a question of founding a Society capable of fighting against the liberalism, everywhere so widespread nowadays that its influence penetrates the Church and the Religious life itself: “A Society of men stripped of everything, especially of themselves; inwardly delivered to the law of love, outwardly to the law of obedience and having as a motto: My God! here I am, with your Divine Son! without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for you!”*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 5/15/1890)

In a Circular letter to the houses of France, Fr. Etchecopar develops a reflection on the foundation of the Congregation. He presents the aim, the means and the method of this project. In the aim of the foundation, one can contemplate the person of Jesus with the two most important quotations of the Manifeste (Hb 10,7 and Ph 2,8.)

The men who want to share his project must be impregnated with the feeling of the Heart of Jesus, conformed to him. When he speaks of the means, Fr. Etchecopar elaborates in an original way, without any quotation, the double law of love and obedience. Curiously, when he

speaks of the exterior law, he does not name obedience but “*the Rule, the community, the poor, humble, crucified life defined by the Rule*”. These are external elements. However, he does not lose the word “love”.

Love shows itself in searching and accomplishing God’s will. It is the feeling of an interior motivation which urges him to give oneself, in the straight line of what St. Paul says in 1 Cor-13, 1-3 : “*Though I command languages both human and angelic -- if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains -- if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned -- if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.*”

Without love, the greatest actions are but an apparent good, when, instead of doing them for the good of others, I make them for my prestige, my interests, my personal profit. We are able to manipulate in ourselves what is best, by reporting it to ourselves. Love resides in the intentions of our hearts which must be oriented towards the neighbour. We must also beware of passions which urge me to think only of myself, to shut myself in my zone of comfort and in my certainties.

***His goal, in giving birth to the Institute, was to form and bring together, men in love with the Heart of Jesus, imbued with His feelings, devoted to His interests, in union with the Heart of his Divine Mother, having as its motto the cry of his obedience, from the moment he was born in the womb of the Immaculate Virgin, until the hour when he expired on the arms of the Cross. Ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam (here I am to do your will O God Heb 10). Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis (he emptied himself and became obedient unto death Phil 2)***  
*This is the goal of the Founder; what are the ways to achieve this?*

1° **Outwardly**, the Rule and the common life, living poor, humble, crucified, and guided by the Rule;

2. **Inwardly**, the spirit or the law of love, whose eye is ever fixed on divine good pleasure, and whose hand is ever stretched out to accomplish it with virginal delicacy. *Quae placita sunt ei facie semper* (I always do what pleases him John 8.29).

(Circular letter to the houses of France, Betharram, 1/3/1885)

In a letter to the religious of the San José College of Buenos Aires (Betharram, 19/2/1885), Fr. Etchecopar speaks of the good report given by Fr. Victor Bourdenne to the American communities after his visit : that of San José, of San Juan Bautista in Buenos Aires and that of the Basques in Montevideo. About the religious of San José, he writes that he already knew that they had kept the primitive spirit. It does not prevent him to be filled with joy by Fr. Bourdenne's report, to the point of presenting him to the Lord in the choir of the sanctuary and in front of the Founder's grave, during one of his ways to the calvary. And he goes on:

*For this, dear fathers and brothers, we must be saints, self-effacing and devoted men, always saying "here I am" **internally to the law of love** that the Holy Spirit never ceases to engrave in our hearts and **externally, to the command of the rule and of our superiors**, never putting our hand to anything, without recognizing and confessing our nothingness, on the one hand, then on the other, without recognizing and confessing that we are at work of God, that God governs us and that nothing will be lacking in us. *Dominus regit me et nihil mihi deerit !* (The Lord rules me and I lack nothing)*

(Circular letter to the religious of the San José College, Buenos Aires 2/19/1885)

In another letter to the religious of the same community of San José (Betharram 4/12/1887), without quoting Fr. Garicoïts, while showing that he has already interiorized his values, Fr. Etchecopar insists on the content



of Fr. Garicoits' letter and develops these values. He speaks of the law of love and obedience. He always names love ; obedience is named once, then he speaks about the aptitudes « these chosen men » must have, and develops them eight or ten times.

*In summary, I feel a great consolation in thinking that you are the children of Our Lady of the Calvary, and that over there, so far, beyond the seas, you continue the work of our founder, with the spirit by which he was animated. He often repeated to us: We must remember **what we are**; we must witness **to what we are**, by our state, and by our profession.*

*And, what of our revered and heroic Father? What did he propose? What did he want for his Congregation?*

*Self-effacing and devoted men, saying: "Here I am" to the double law that must govern us:*

*1°- **Within us, to the law of love of the Holy Spirit** who never ceases to cry out, in the depths of our hearts: Father! Here I am!*

*2°- **Externally, to the great law of obedience.***

*Self-effacing and devoted men, presenting themselves in everything and always recognizing and confessing their nothingness, abandoned, **given body and soul inwardly to the feeling of the purest, most perfect love**; abandoned bodies and souls given externally **into the hands of their superiors**, to be placed, moved, warned, corrected and missioned and sticking to their duty with sacrifice and devotion with the means at their disposal and chosen by them, and this until to death, even death on a cross!*

*Humble and devoted men so dead to themselves, so enamoured of divine good pleasure that in everything and everywhere they have only a double concern:*

*1°- To never exceed the limits of one's vocation and job;*

*2°- **To exercise within these limits the immensity of charity.***

*Here, my Fathers and my Brothers, is the whole thought and spirit of Father Garicoits: here is his *recta sapere*, (rule of wisdom) which he never ceased to recommend to us, to fight*

*against the spirit of the age, the fashions of the day or the liberalism of the day.*

*Such are the foundations on which he built his work, the solid stone on which it has withstood many assaults, and where it has been blessed by God, in spite of many obstacles.*

(Circular letter to the religious of the San José College, Betharram, 12/4/1887)

In his circular letter written in Betharram on 23/1/1889, Fr. Etchecopar transcribes not a letter but a document by Fr. Garicoïts named “Form of life of the Institute”, where are exposed some original features of the Betharramite Congregation. We can find there two original characteristics of the mission of the Institute:

*D. What are this end and these means proper to our Society?*

*A. Although it has in common with other religious institutes the general aim of striving for perfection, **it has this particularity that its aim is not only to strive for the perfection of its members, but also to work for perfection of the neighbour in his own way.***

*Q. In what does this manner consist?*

*A. In two main things:*

*1° **In the appropriation, if I may say so, of our two partial ends:** for we seek our own perfection so much that we want to make it serve entirely, with the means that we employ, the sanctification of our neighbour; not so as to harm our own, but so as to further our own advancement in the perfection of our state.*

*2° **In the singular obedience that we profess; for our proper character is to obey without excuse, without delay, without reservation of action, or will, or judgment, more from love than from any other motive.** Elsewhere there may be some room for manoeuvre; for us none, or sin may appear.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 12/4/1889)

## 2. By love more than any other motive

2.1 The other source of Fr. Garicoïts' spirituality where Fr. Etchecopar finds his inspiration is in the motto ended by "*out of love more than any other motive*", which is presented in several ways.

2.1.1. As in the case of the double law, we find the theme of reference in quotations of St. Michael's made by Fr. Etchecopar:

*...we must in all our deliberate conduct respond to the Holy Spirit and to our Superiors: Here I am! **out of love for the will of my God**, without delay, without reserve and without return!*

(To the Fathers & Brothers in America, Betharram, 12/4/1881.  
Correspondence SMG, Vol. II, letter 293)

*Oh ! Yes ! sint homines idonei, expediti et expositi, (let them be men who are capable, well-equipped and open) that with the grace of God they be devoted and committed to this and obey without delay, without reserve and without return, **out of love rather than any other sentiment.***

*It will be the reign of God through you and in you and not the reign of Messieurs Barbé, Guimon, Larroy, etc. etc...*

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 12/4/1881.  
Correspondence SMG, II, letter 209 to Fr. Didace Barbé)

2.1.2. We have also found **the different steps of Fr. Garicoïts' method to know and accomplish God's will**, and from there, once more, the same motto "*...out of love...*". Fr. Etchecopar asserts that Fr. Garicoïts practised this method with art to embrace and accomplish God's will.

*"Non praeire, sed sequi. Do not anticipate Providence, but when it has spoken, forward! despite all the obstacles; respect infinitely*

*the limits of grace and position while exercising within these limits the **immensity of charity.***

***To discover the will of God and his least desires, to renounce all illusions and deviations of the heart;***

***dispose of oneself in the most perfect imitation of our Divine Master,***

***be open to anyone who has the right to ask, obey out of love rather than any other motive, without delay, without reserve, without return”.***

*These principles and this art of our venerable Founder were the invariable rule of his conduct from the day when, prostrate in our ancient Chapel, his soul flooded with an extraordinary light, he embraced the plan that came from on high, and devoted himself to achieve it.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 1/3/1885)

2.1.3. The motto is applied not only to religious as persons, but also to the whole Congregation. We find again the different steps of the sequela Christi. The motto also takes here the style of a prayer.

*Here, it was a question of founding a Society capable of fighting against this liberalism, everywhere so widespread nowadays that its influence penetrates the Church and Religious Life itself: “A Society stripped of everything, especially of themselves; interiorly delivered to the law of love, exteriorly to the law of obedience and having as motto: **My God! here I am, with your Divine Son! without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for you!** »*

*It needed wisdom to devise such a plan and strength to execute it and bring it to a successful conclusion.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 15/5/1890)

2.1.4. In the obituary of Fr. Higuères, Fr. Etchecopar writes this:

*And he [Fr. Higuères] was right; he was only the faithful echo of our Founder, and his motto: **Here I am! Through love !***

(Circular letter, Betharram, 6/7/1892)

2.1.5. In his letter to the Fathers and Brothers of America, after encouraging and exhorting them to live faithfully the charism of the Congregation, Fr. Etchecopar evokes the cause of Fr. Garicoïts. In this exhortation context, he dedicates the « out of love » motto to them.

***With the help of grace, imbued with your sublime vocation, you will break down all obstacles you will strip the old man always reborn from his ashes; you will put on Our Lord Jesus and with new ardour, like generous and strong eagles, nourished by the divine Blood, at the very source of our adorable Heart, you will soar in your celestial flight, saying with our holy Founder: My God and my all! Here I am ; here we are without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for you!***

*I have just quoted the motto of our Father! His process continues, albeit slowly.*

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 18/12/1886)

2.1.6. In the letter where Fr. Etchecopar writes the obituary of Br. Marc Ladevèze, he praises his obedience and affirms that he was bearing the Founder's seal:

***His obedience bore the seal of our venerable Founder: "Here I am without delay, without reserve and without return, out of love for you, O my God! The divine will was the nourishment in which he delighted and the tenderly cherished mother in whose arms he enjoyed an unalterable rest.***

(Circular letter, Betharram, 23/1/1888)

## **II. Love in Fr. Etchecopar**

### *1. The love of God*

The circular letters of Fr. Etchecopar are impregnated with a reflection on the Love God has for us and which shows itself in the blessings he gives us in the concrete situations of life, according to the Ignatian spirituality :

*“Contemplation to gain love. First, it is well to remark two things: the first is that love ought to be put more in deeds than in words. The second, love consists in interchange between the two parties; that is to say in the lover’s giving and communicating to the beloved what he has or out of what he has or can; and so, on the contrary, the beloved to the lover.” [Ex. Sp. 233 - 231] et : “The second, to ask for what I want. It will be here to ask for interior knowledge of so great good received, in order that being entirely grateful, I may be able in all to love and serve His Divine Majesty.” [Ex. Sp. 233]*

*“The First Point is, to bring to memory the benefits received, of Creation, Redemption and particular gifts, pondering with much feeling how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He has, and then the same Lord desires to give me Himself as much as He can, according to His Divine ordination.*

*And with this to reflect on myself, considering with much reason and justice, what I ought on my side to offer and give to His Divine Majesty, that is to say, everything that is mine, and myself with it, as one who makes an offering with much feeling:*

***Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my intellect, and all my will -- all that I have and possess. Thou gavest it to me: to Thee, Lord, I return it! All is Thine, dispose of it according to all Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.” [Ex. Sp. 234]***

This dynamic of love, we find it again in Fr. Etchecopar who clearly finds his inspiration in Fr. Garicoïts. This love is an obvious favour of God in his life.

***Here is a new favour from the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary. She has such a novel and exceptional character that she will melt all hearts and make them overflow with thanksgiving. The Sovereign Pontiff has just authorized, directly and immediately by himself, the establishment of our Institute in Bethlehem, to serve the Convent of the Carmelites there and to***

***devote itself to all the works that the Patriarch of Jerusalem deigns to entrust to us.***

*I have the Rescript in my hands. Barely ten days ago, very great difficulties opposed our foundation in the Holy Land; but our beloved Leo XIII lifted them all with a word from his mouth and by a direct act of his Judicial Sovereign Authority, etc.*

***Betharram in Bethlehem by the express order of the Holy Father! Is this not a privilege bringing great joy?***

*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum quod et erit omni populo in nostra Congregatione. [I announce to you great joy that it will be for all the people in our Congregation.]*

*Yes; rejoice; but only in the Lord. To him the honour, to us the confusion!*

*Let's pray!! Let us meditate on all these things in silence, as Mary did near the Crib.*

*Maria autem conservabat omnia verba haec, conferens in cord suo.*

(Circular letter, Rome, 25/12/1878)

He also considers as a favour of God Fr. Bianchi's visit to Bethlehem. Fr. Bianchi is the Dominican priest who welcomed Fr. Estrate and Fr. Bordachar, indicated by Sister Maryam of Jesus Crucified to bring the first Constitutions of Betharram to Rome, after they had spent much time at the bottom of a drawer in Mgr. Lacroix's office. It is in the sacristy of the Basilica Santa Maria of the Minerva in Rome that both Fathers met Fr. Bianchi, to whom Fr. Bordachar was bringing a present from the Mauléon Dominican sisters. This Father Bianchi o.p., who was a member of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, facilitated the affair for the two Fathers who were not accustomed to the style of the Curia. Afterwards, he went on advising Fr. Etchecopar each time the latter went to Rome to bring corrections to the Constitutions for this Congregation.

***The good Lord has just granted us a great favour, by providing us with a visit from the Most Reverend Father Bianchi [...]. He has since repeated to me several times:***

***“From heaven, your Holy Founder obtained for you in such a short time this union of minds and hearts which I consider a miracle, and which is so rare in such circumstances”.***

*These, dear Fathers and Brothers, are very consoling words; so the whole Community was delighted with this visit, although it only lasted about four hours.[...].*

***Let us bless God again, dear Fathers and dear Brothers, for having given us such a protector!***

*Let us follow his advice full of wisdom which binds us to our state, to our spirit of humility, obedience, gentleness and charity; thus we will respond to his bounties, to his wishes, and to all the designs of the Lord.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 2/12/1879)

A new favour of God , for which he is thankful, is the approval of the Constitutions by Rome:

*We have to render to God, to the Blessed Virgin, very lively thanksgiving.*

***Yesterday, May 6, we received the Decree of His Holiness Leo XIII approving our Constitutions ad decennium, for ten years, with some rectifications and additions made by the Holy See, according to the Rules of the Church and in conformity with the wishes of our General Chapters.***

(Circular letter, Betharram, 7/5/1890)

Fr . Auguste compares the establishment of a community in Bethlehem to those of Argentina and Uruguay. The four communities take care of young people. He considers the work of Bethlehem as a gift of God’s mercy. One has to give thanks to God by striving to be more and more worthy of these graces.

***Such are, my Fathers and my Brothers, the origin and the titles of our establishment in Bethlehem. Isn't this the work of God, the work of his Heart and of his arm, of his new Mercies,***



*surpassing all those that we had received up to this day? For, while America opens its arms to our most tender children, Bethlehem introduces our young people into the House of Bread; and there, with the tenderness of a Mother, she makes them sit at a table where all their needs are satisfied, and where, under the patronage of the Patriarch who esteems us and of the Consul who assures us of his benevolence, our Scholastics will grow in all knowledge and virtue.*

*Let us bless God, my Fathers and my Brothers, let us continue to bless him, to respond to his mercies, to make ourselves ever more worthy of them. I try to help you with my feeble prayers; already, I placed you all in the Crib of Jesus in Bethlehem and in his Sepulcher in Jerusalem, where I was able to kneel; thus I will continue until my departure... For, O my God, indebted to my Brothers for all your blessings, I can taste them only with them and through them: propter Fratres meos.*

(Circular letter, Bethlehem, 23/12/1890)

In the letter written in Betharram when coming back from America (Circular letter, Betharram 22/5/1891), Fr Etchecopar wrote:

*We returned yesterday evening to Betharram, in perfect health; the Good Lord has thus deigned to favour us to the end. Help me thank him.*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 22/5/1891)

He communicates to the whole Congregation the note he has received from the postulator of the cause of Fr. Garicoïts, in which he announces that the examination of written documents was finished and that the experts had met no obstacles to the canonization cause. Fr. Etchecopar considers these good news as a blessing for the whole Congregation, and asks its members to answer this gift of God by a greater faithfulness to their religious engagements.

This is an experience of love : to the gifts given by the Lord in all circumstances of life, Fr. Etchecopar and all the religious must answer, not

only by prayers of thanksgiving, but also by their faithfulness to their vocations in all the situations of their lives. Love consists in making good to make the neighbour's quality of life better.

*I received from Rome the following lines from the Advocate of our dear Cause, dated December 21 last.*

*“My Very reverend. Father, I was anxious to announce to you that the examination of all the writings of Fr. Garicoits has been finally completed. At last, I am happy to share this good news with you. In addition, we have to rejoice that the examiners have noted nothing of a nature to prevent or delay the progress of the process. There is therefore reason to hope that, in the course of the year 1896, Fr. Garicoits will be honored with the title and name of Venerable.*

*A. Mariani »*

*What happy news, my Fathers and my Brothers! and, in the hope of such honour for the Father and the children, what a pressing motive of zeal, what a powerful spur of generosity! Oh ! soon will begin the solemn struggle which will have to decide on the glorification of the Head of the family. On the one hand the Servant of God, with the works of his heroism; on the other, the adversary, the slanderer, the homicide. Would we remain cold spectators of such a fight? And won't our filial tenderness inspire us with demonstrations of courage? Oh ! With our eyes fixed on this great debate, let us compose each day, by our works, an eloquent plea for the canonisation of our Leader. Let us shine before Heaven and earth the light of his virtues by the brilliance of our life. Like him, let us show ourselves to the eyes of all, perfect Christians, by faith, by charity and by patience; Perfect priests, by a prudent zeal and by a conduct which is in everything edifying and which, according to an energetic expression, well known among us, makes even calumny impossible; finally, perfect religious by the vigilant flight from the dangers of the world, by an exact regularity and an entire obedience of mind and heart.*

***And to summarize everything in two words, let us fix our eyes on the banner of our Founder; and follow him repeating his motto: Forward! Self-effacing and devoted, within the bounds of obedience in the immensity of charity!***

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***At the beginning of the new year, I give thanks to the Father of Mercy for all the goods he bestows on you and has given you to work for his glory during the past months.***

***I conjure him to confirm you in his service and in his love, and to grant you the honor and the joy of spending yourselves for a long time with fruit under the Standard of the divine Heart and under the wings of our tender Mother, the Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of Calvary.***

***As I know of no better reward, no more pressing encouragement for your apostolic souls and your filial piety than the words of our venerable founder, I am going to transcribe to you, for the second time, I believe, a few passages from two of his letters.***

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram,, 4/12/1881).

(Follows Letter 293 of SMG Correspondence, Vol. II)

In this circular letter written from Betharram on 15/5 /1890, Fr. Auguste ponders on Jesus' words to both disciples of Emmaüs, telling that the Messiah had to suffer a lot before being glorified. From there, he makes a paschal presentation of Fr. Garicoïts : the motives of his sufferings and the motives of his glory. It is the Gospel law. This pontifical brief approving our Constitutions is a favour, a good action of God for Fr. Garicoïts and the Congregation.

***Our Divine Savior said to the disciples of Emmaus: "Was it not necessary that Christ suffered these things and thereby entered into his glory? ("Nun haec oportuit pati Christum et ita intrare in gloriam suam?") Luke24.26***

***At the sight of the Pontifical Brief approving our Constitutions, I sought, apart from myself, the cause of this new and signal favour, I found no other than the Gospel precept recalled***

**above: the cross alone leads to triumph, and it was necessary that Father Garicoits, after having suffered much, following his Master, should one day enter into his glory: et ita intrare in gloriam suam.**

(Circular letter, Betharram, 15/5/1890)

Another grace, another favour, another blessing of God we did not deserve and the accomplishment of which was so difficult, is the papal authorization to establish a community in Bethlehem of Juda, in a privileged place offering many opportunities for our life and mission:

*I am in Bethlehem of Judah; I write to you from Bethlehem of Judah; **what Grace! What joy!** And how do you express it? ...in this Holy Land where one sees only “holy mountains and fertile valleys and a hundred reported miracles” .*

***A few minutes from the stable where our Saviour was born, and not far from Jerusalem where he died to redeem us, stands our Residence, in a location and in conditions so favorable to health, studies and piety, that to appreciate this, one must see it with one's own eyes.***

*I see it and I am moved by it; I am moved to the most intimate part of my being, and my eyes are bathed in tears, and as if from myself, I cry out with the Prophet: “Invenimus eam... adorabimus in loco ubi steterunt pedes eius”. “We found the House by his footprints; we will dwell there, we will take our rest there, for it is the light that God has chosen to share with us: quoniam elegit Dominus” (Ps.131).*

***But how, O my Fathers and my Brethren, has God cast his eyes on our lowliness to grant us such a favour? ... Here is the hour when we must bear witness to the truth and proclaim loudly the debt of our gratitude; and how sweet it is to me, in this City where St Jerome wrote his immortal Commentaries, to the prayers of Paula and Eustochium!***

(Circular letter, Bethlehem, 23/12/1890)

The gift of Bethlehem has many aspects and is increasing thanks to the scholasticate, because of the French law about the military service, provoked by the persecution. Bethlehem indeed welcomes the first scholasticate of the Congregation. It will be possible to organize it according to the Church laws, etc.

*Te Deum laudamus! Yes, let us thank God together for his abundant blessings on our work in Bethlehem. If it consisted only of a simple Residence, of an ordinary chaplaincy, we would be proud and happy with it. But to be associated with the apostolate of Our Lord in the very places where he accomplishes his mission! What a favour capable of arousing jealousy among the angels themselves!!*

*Now, our establishment of Bethlehem, already so precious, has taken on a capital importance, which has transformed it; it has become the first Scholasticate, the first regular Seminary of our Institute. The Scholasticate! The seminary! Who does not understand, with the Church and its Councils, that absolute necessity?*

*And who among us did not groan when we saw other pressing demands among us impede their regular establishment and their complete functioning?*

*Finally, the good Lord, by an extraordinary coup de grace, defeated all the obstacles; and, changing obstacles into opportunities, used opposition to grant our most ardent desires. Did I say “grant”?... Ah! It has already exceeded all our expectations; I speak to you of what I see, and I want to try to describe to you the spectacle of which I am the tender witness.*

(Circular letter, Bethlehem, 23/11/1892)

In his first circular letter to all the religious of Buenos Aires, Fr. Etchecopar starts by thanking the Heart of Jesus for the care with which it protected Fr. Romain Bourdenne and himself, during the crossing of the Atlantic and the quarantine they had to live on the ship before disembarking in La Plata.

Then Fr. Auguste witnesses how the work accomplished by the religious in the College is appreciated. This devotedness, joined to that of Fr. Garicoïts and of all those who have carried on his work and mission, is also a manifestation of God's love for the Congregation, which those who benefit from it know how to appreciate, and for which ourselves must be grateful.

*Thanks to your prayers, thanks to the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus, we arrived safe and sound at the end of our journey.*

*The good Lord has visibly protected us, sheltered in the shadow of his wings during the fatigues inseparable from a long crossing and during the five days of quarantine that were imposed on us. This time, we had the good fortune to stay on board our steamer, in the least unfavorable conditions possible during our ordeal.*

(Circular letter, Buenos Aires, 5/12/1891)

[...]

*I had made an ideal of our work in America; the reality far surpasses anything I had imagined. Also, just telling you this softens me and brings me sweet and abundant tears... I saw our three hundred students take communion yesterday. **We are besieged with visits from distinguished men of all the highest classes and conditions; they come to transfer to strangers their feelings of gratitude towards their former masters, our Fathers and our Brothers; and tomorrow, they will come back in greater numbers to attend my Mass, receive Communion from my hand and then welcome us in a public session. My God! My God! What good has been effected by our Institute, founded and begun by our Servant Father Garicoïts and pursued with so much fidelity, energy, obedience, love, by our saints who reign above and by those who fight on earth and who will fight until their death!! Amen! Amen!***

(Circular letter, Bethlehem, 5/12/1891)

## 2. Love for God

In this circular letter to the religious in America written in Betharram (29/9/1989), Fr. Etchecopar tells them about the difficult situation where they find themselves in France : the recent elections in the department, the difficulties they have caused in the Church, the risk of expropriation threatening the properties, and in the end the difficulties which may be caused by the compulsory military service for the scholastics.

We have already seen that God's blessings are concrete goods made to our persons or to our institutions in ordinary life. Fr. Etchecopar and all the religious gratefully answer him in prayer, but also in leading a straight life, faithful in any circumstances to the commitment taken when embracing the consecrated vocation. God is loved when, amidst hardships, one does not go back, and, while watching and praying, one inspires to the others the courage to have a straight conduct. It corresponds to the Ignatian watchword « to love and serve in everything ». Fr. Etchecopar encourages all the religious to act with paresia. They must not be troubled, but meet the difficulties bravely, united inside and outside.

*What about the people, you ask? What happens to them under martial law? Thereupon, in practice, there is information to be taken, then consequent measures: **what I observe, thanking God with all my soul, are the dispositions of our young people, ready for anything, to stay faithful to God and to the Congregation... With this, we must watch and pray, but in no way be disturbed: quite the contrary, in the difficulties, in the hazards of war, we huddle together and we rush, at the voice of the leader with our eye on the flag : Forward! without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for God.***

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 29/9/1889)

In this circular letter written from Oloron, Fr. Etchecopar says that the General Chapter has expressed that our Constitutions must urgently

receive their final approval from Rome. He also announces that he has finished preparing the book of thoughts in Sarrance and that it answers the request to revive the enthusiasm of living like Fr. Garicoïts lived and proposed us to live. He calls him the « beloved Father ». To live is also to give one's life for a noble cause, which may benefit to another person.

*May it please God, my dear Fathers and Brothers, that all things (cf. the book of his Thoughts) turn out to the glory of our beloved Father!*

***It is worthy, it is right to devote all our efforts and our whole life to the success of such a noble enterprise!***

(Circular letter, Oloron, -/2/1889)

In this circular letter written from Rome, Fr. Etchecopar evokes the testimonies of some Bishops, friends of the Congregation, and quotes some of them. He considers this as a gift of God, for which we must give thanks, because the spirit which has always moved us in our concrete life has remained alive:

***It is right, therefore, to return to Heaven the most humble and lively thanksgiving, repeating with Father Garicoïts: "God, from whom all good proceeds, is the author of our Society; he governs it; he will keep it and advance it in his holy service."***

***Let us thank him again for the good spirit which never ceases to animate ours, and of which I was able to say to the Holy Father, in my general report: "The crisis which France is undergoing has not affected the spirit of the Institute; the vows and the Rules are faithfully observed there; we can say that each one there does what is in the power of good will, to advance in the perfection of his state".***

***Finally, let us express to the Lord our deep gratitude for the testimonies which the Ordinaries and the Bishops, our Protectors, hastened to give us.***



*Before depositing these testimonial letters with the Sacred Congregation, I think it very pleasant and very advantageous to give you at least a few short quotations or a rapid analysis.*

(Circular letter, Rome, 15/3/1889)

In this circular letter, Fr. Etchecopar reminds us that it is up to us to show the spirit of the Congregation in our conduct. Such will be our love, answering the love of God for us, expressed in all his blessings for us.

*Let us pause here, my Fathers and my Brothers. These precious teachings suffice to show that, according to our venerable Founder, our spirit is essentially religious and that it is distinguished by the perfection of an obedience drawn point by point from the Divine Heart of Jesus.*

*It is therefore clear that it is not enough for us to be good Christians and good priests, to fulfill our various ministries with application, zeal and dedication; but that we must also bear in everything the character of true religious. And exercise all our functions in accordance with our vows, our Rules, in the order of obedience, and under the discipline to which we are committed.*

*It is also manifest that we have a pressing and sublime duty to justify before God and before men our name of Priests and Apostles of the Sacred Heart, by constantly combating any spirit that would be contrary to it, especially the spirit of independence and selfishness, (which comes at us from all sides) by substituting for it this Ecce Venio of humility, obedience and love, which one day saved the world and which, at this hour, must regenerate it.*

*Beg our adorable Master, high on the Cross, to fill us with his spirit! Ask the Virgin, her Mother and our Sovereign, to obtain it for us, by the merits of her pains!! Then, let everyone strive to abound in it always more: ut abundetis magis (1cor 15.58).*

(Circular letter, Betharram, 12/4/1889)

### 3. *Love for the brother, a son of God like me*

The love for any man, who is my brother, shows itself in the devotedness to the persons entrusted in the mission. It is a passionate love, so that they may know Jesus, may be his disciples and so may be saved. We find this in a number of quotations brought in the two preceding points. Fraternal love is an integral part of God's love: To accomplish in a responsible way the mission entrusted by God implies sacrificing oneself to love each person so that he may live better in every day life, material as well as spiritual. On the other hand, to devote yourself to the brother, you have to forget yourself, your comfort, to refuse what comes first from your heart to your profit only, to face difficulties and hardships, sometimes to face misunderstandings with those who are nearest to you, who have another anthropology and do not understand you. On the other hand, to make good to the brother, in the mission, community or any other circumstance, is to make good to the Master (Mt.25,40). Here are some more specific quotations:

*Thanks be to Heaven, the Tribunal of the Founder's writings has begun; and, last Monday, for 4 hours, I delivered to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal about 140 signed letters and 160 copies of other signed letters from our revered Father.*

***Oh ! Let us be ourselves, by our works, his credentials and the living expression of his doctrine and his teaching!! To this end, let us imprint on each of our thoughts and actions the Ecce Venio of his humility and dedication!!! What a consolation, at the hour of my departure, to tell me that you are resolved to it, and that this will be your motto, what you show to all, Superiors and Inferiors!***

(Circular letter, Betharram, 1/11/1891)

In this letter, Fr. Etchecopar describes for us the pilgrimage he makes nearly every day to Fr. Garicoïts' grave, climbing the Calvary hill. He spoke about it in other occasions, but in this letter, he describes it as a

personal experience. He offers Fr. Garicoïts the activities of the missionaries in America, namely their pastoral or educative activities by which they do good for the persons. This is also love. In front of the grave, he often says a prayer for Fr. Garicoïts' intention which he transmits us after the quotation.

***It is above all in my almost daily pilgrimage to Calvary that I try to identify myself with your dearest interests, with the most ardent wishes of your piety, of your love for God and his Church, in order to deposit your hearts and your intentions on the tomb of the revered founder.***

*Even today, about 3 hours ago, after the Rosary said in common, I climbed, often stopping, the holy mountain. Beneath my feet, the ice melting in the midday heat; opposite Isarce [hill], with a coat of grey and white, marked along its entire length by furrows of snow dazzling with light; over my head and already leaning on the horizon, a sun with soft and warm breath; everywhere, a profound silence, interrupted by the passage of some devout pilgrim.*

*Here I am on the esplanade, first at the foot of the Great Cross, opposite all those cherished tombs where brothers sleep, in the peace of the Lord. Finally, I prostrate myself before the marble stone, so often kissed, so often covered with lights, which already seems to participate in the glory of the tombs of the saints.*

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 3/1/1891)

In this letter, Fr. Etchecopar narrates for the Bethlehem community the welcome reserved for the Cardinal Legate to the Eucharistic Congress of Jerusalem (1). He communicates the joy and honour of this visit. He had sent a scholastic to note down the Cardinal's word of greeting, without being noticed, as when he asked the Betharram novices for the same service during Fr. Garicoïts' speeches. He transmits the Cardinal's message very proudly. The Legate of Leon XIII<sup>1</sup> stressed how to make good humbly

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<sup>1</sup> The VIIIth International Eucharistic World Congress took place in Jerusalem in the Ottoman Empire, from May 14th to May 21st 1893. The Papal Legate of Leon XIII was Mgr. Langemieu, Cardinal Archbishop of Reims (1874-1905). [www.congres-oeucaristico-internacional.blogspot.com](http://www.congres-oeucaristico-internacional.blogspot.com)

and devotedly. Isn't the devotedness for others the true love for the neighbour? "I like your way of doing good so much", the Cardinal Legate said.

*Nevertheless, the reception was beautiful; and, in the evening, we were informed that His Eminence would visit the various Communities and would deviate from his route to climb our hill. It was quarter past five when the Cardinal appeared, on horseback, escorted by the Kawas and accompanied by the Consul, Fr. Le Rebours, Curé of La Magdeleine, etc. I welcomed him, telling him that his visit filled us with honour and joy: honour, because of the incomparable greatness of his dignity and his merits; of joy, because we found him as we had known him at the foot of the Pyrenees, the best of Fathers. "To the Cardinal Legate of Leo XIII, we offered our most complete obedience, according to the formula of Fr. Garicoits: without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for God and his Church. To this Father whose love is immeasurable even towards his most humble children, we have offered our hearts, asking God to give long life to this Prince of the Church, this sweet Pontiff whom History, (confirming the acts of the Congress and the unanimous judgment of its members), shall call the Legate of Light and the Legate of the Heart". The Cardinal, his eyes wet with tears, answered us in these terms, recorded by our dear Scholastics:*

*"My good Father, you tell me your emotion; I am as moved as you. Who would have thought that we would meet here, on this hill, under this beautiful Bethlehem sky?*

*Hearing you express to me as always your feelings of filial piety and unreserved devotion, it was like a sweet fantasy of my heart; I found myself at the foot of the Pyrenees, in those cool valleys, by the sound of those waters that bathe your holy solitude over there.*

*I so enjoyed visiting your dear Community! I loved your way of doing good, without brilliance, in simplicity and effacement! Here and in the New Continent you do the same; and these*

*beautiful works which have come to you and other equally brilliant ones which still await you, are the reward of this self-effacement. It is the law of the Gospel: The more one effaces oneself, the more God blesses. And he only uses men imbued with the feeling of their lowness to do good and a very great good in his Church.*

*You have at the base of your Institute this fruitful humility. Your Founder was one of those truly self-effacing men; and that is why his life has remained and will remain like a luminous beacon which attracts and will always attract the eyes of all; and this is why the Holy Church wanted to collect the heroic traits of his holiness in order to be able to offer them as models to all her children.*

*It is my most ardent wish that this cause succeed as soon as possible for the glorification of this humble Servant of God, for the edification of the whole Church, for your reward and an encouragement to all of you.*

*And you, my children, formed by these lofty examples, you will continue these traditions of humility and devotion, here, in Bethlehem, for the consolation of your venerable Patriarch and for the good of this dear country of the East, and wherever the good Lord will kindly guide you. This is your spirit; be faithful to it”.*

*To these paternal words, the Legate immediately added the graces of the Papal Blessing. Then he entered the Residence, prayed in the oratory and took some refreshments in the episcopal chamber.*

*As he descended, he paused for a long time with the scholastics, like a Father in the midst of his children, and gave them each an image of Blessed Urban II. Fr. Romain, present throughout the ceremony, had an abundant share of tender wishes granted to the Scholasticate.*

*On leaving us, His Eminence went down to Carmel.*

(Circular letter, Bethlehem, 28/5/1893)

Fr. Etchecopar resides in Bethlehem for his second pilgrimage. A few months before, he had come back from his visit to the American

communities and had kept all the memories of his life near the religious, of the pupils' parents' and teachers' affection for them, in particular his memories in the San José College which had marked him. He makes a precious meditation on the Bethlehem humility and poverty. He makes a parallel between the poor origins of the Congregation and that of the American mission, specially the San José College. Love is to devote oneself to the mission without being overcome by difficulties. Fr. Etchecopar always joins devotedness and self-effacement. In this letter, we find united the three expressions of love: God's Love : charity, when they arrive in Buenos Aires and lack everything, gives them the lodging and food necessary for their lives... The love for God : the devotedness of the religious enabling them to overcome difficulties and giving them joy and peace, like Mary and Joseph in the crib ; the love for the neighbour: the religious of San José were springing, flying to devote themselves to the others everywhere : at the altar, in the street, in the classroom, in their domestic tasks:

*Father Garicoits had to beg 4,000 francs from a pious woman, who was struck by his holiness; the journey of the missionaries only followed the practice of all the apostolic virtues; when they arrive, they find... what? Maybe open arms and a ready setup? No, nothing but obstacles, or at least not the slightest consideration, not the slightest encouragement. **I'm wrong...the charity was there to provide them with the shelter and food they needed. It's a blessing not to die! Oh! what is it, to found anything? But what am I saying? This destitution is a lot, it is the essential, it is the true foundation of the works of God: it is the Stable... Ah! How many resemblances between the cradle of the divine Savior and the cradle of all our works. First of all the cradle of Betharram, and then those of the colony, especially of San José. In the house where our first Fathers settled, they found the destitution, the dirt of the stable of Bethlehem; but what a treasure they found there like the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph! Joy in poverty, joy in sacrifice, joy in the Holy Spirit et justitia et pax et gaudium in Spiritu Sancto. With these***

*dispositions, the hardest, darkest, most thankless work becomes light: whether or not one succeeds before men matters little; whether or not one enjoys their consideration, their applause, and the favours and well-being of the temporal order; all this is useful as a means of zeal, basically, but it does not give merit before God, nor his peace in the bottom of the heart. But with grace within, we run, we fly through thickets and thorns; and our first Fathers of San José, carried on the wings of holy love, knew neither pause nor rest; they gathered all graces at the same time; they were simultaneously priests at the altar, professors and masters of studies with the pupils, lay brothers in the offices of the house, in the very streets of the city and they could say with the apostle St Paul by showing their hands and their shoulders: “Here are the hands that have worked and the shoulders that have borne painful burdens, following the example of the great worker of heaven and earth who became the architect of our salvation and our happiness. Laboramus, operantes manibus nostris” (1Cor 4.12)*

*Is that all ? No, my friends: after the poor and obscure beginnings of Bethlehem, after the hard and long crushing labours of Nazareth, it was necessary to crown the building with the martyrdom of Calvary: what a last and striking character imprinted on the work of San José! !! Yes, it lacked nothing: neither the anguish of Gethsemane, when we were deliberating on the complete abandonment of the work, nor the flight nor the abandonment of those who were to support it, nor finally the death of Golgotha. accepted by Father Barbé with the heroic obedience that places everything, absolutely everything with filial abandonment in the hands of the Heavenly Father.*

*These comparisons are true; they indicate the special character of this work; and this story of its past is, I believe, the program and the prophecy of its future.*

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Bethlehem, 12/12/1892)

Fr. Auguste has just come back from his journey to America. He hurries to inform all the religious of what he has lived with the religious living there, who are faithful to their charism and accomplish their mission in a

responsible way. He also gives them the reasons why he wanted to travel there and meet the brothers gone overseas...

God's favour is the fraternity, the communion (*unum sint*) between the religious of America, between them and those of France and of the Holy Land. It is an obvious favour. Our answer to this gift of God must also be visible : by offering a Magnificat and an Ecce Venio in their lives, to thank God by making his will by serving the brothers, the men and women we meet. The Ecce Venio love incarnates itself in humility, meekness, obedience and devotedness.

***Finally, these bonds of love and obedience which always united the members of the American Colony between themselves and with the Mother House, we wanted to consolidate them and make them even closer.***

*Now, here is what our dear Father Assistant wrote to us from Betharram on April 4: "You knew how much we loved and esteemed these dear Brothers of America; but it seems to me that they become doubly dear to us, since you are among them. We are so touched by the filial veneration with which they surround you! And you, with your goodness as a Father, bring out their virtues and their merits so admirably that we remain delighted with everything you tell us".*

***Ah! this esteem and this mutual affection, this love stronger than death, which unites and makes invincible in the Heart of the Divine Master. Here, my Fathers and Brothers, is the most precious treasure of the Community and the most excellent result granted by Divine Goodness.***

***For this favour, crowning all the others, we offer, hasten to offer, I beg you, the Magnificat of the most perfect gratitude, and the Ecce Venio of the most complete devotion.***

(Circular letter, Betharram, 29/5/1892)



#### 4. *The result of this triple movement is Communion and Fraternity*

In this last quotation, we have discovered the communion with God and the brothers in the dynamic of the three loves united. In the communion, we fully reach Love. The imperfect communion we realize between us, with the strength of the Holy Spirit and the gift of accepting each other, makes us richer persons and makes grow in humanity by God's grace. It brings us nearer this full communion which is Love in Heaven, by communicating, to each other and to God, the goods we have received, without reserving anything for ourselves.

Such is the real desire of Jesus and of Fr. Garicoïts: « *Unum sint* » (Jn 17,21-23). We find it in other circular letter. In this first quotation, he speaks of communion as an experience he has lived when celebrating the Holy Thursday:

*Oh ! Dear Fathers and Brothers, how sweet are the bonds established by the love of our Lord! We have experienced it once more, through the visit of these two Fathers who have edified us so much! You feel it, now when they have returned to the front line, and when they spread, in the two communities, a spirit of love and sacrifice coupled with an exquisite modesty and simplicity, which is our primitive spirit and which, from their soul where it abounds, shows on the outside.*

*Therefore you and I should consider ourselves, more and more happy and proud to belong to this work, which came from the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary and happy to be its honour and support; let us attach ourselves more strongly to obedience, to charity, to regularity, to the humility of love, which will make us inside, a heart and a soul, and outside a compact body, firm in the unity of the same laws and the same external observances.*

*Here is the Unum sint that I have just requested for our very dear congregation, in the touching solemnity of Holy Thursday*

*which has just ended, in our chapel, so piously. Father Barbé sang Mass, and we were all, priests, Levites, pupils, faithful, young and old, children of the same Father, eating at his table the bread of charity, so that those who live may not live just humanly, but divinely and eternally, like their Father... O goodness! oh goodness! if we knew you well!!*

*(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 22/4/1886)*

*Let us think about it, dear Fathers and Brothers... let us often look at our coat of arms, then go to the bottom of our hearts to analyse the feelings that shape our words and our actions; and if we discover traits of resemblance to the Model given by God, chosen by us, let us give thanks to him from whom all gifts flow; that above all of union with the heart and love of our God... If, on the contrary, we notice a conflict between the banner and the soldier who raises it, pray earnestly to the Divine Leader who leads us, to give us a heart new and a righteous mind, worthy of him and our vows.*

*And then, always forward, repeating the cry of our little troupe: **Ecce Venio! Here I am!** Here I am, according to the words of the founder, in the service of humility and charity, in hatred of the pride and selfishness of the century... **Here I am, united to my Saviour, in his obedience to his Father, and in his zeal for the salvation of souls. Here I am especially the apostle of respect, of perfect submission to the Superiors, in hatred of the spirit of insubordination and selfishness which is the scourge of our time.***

*(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 18/6/1886)*

*With the help of grace, fired by your sublime vocation, you will break down all obstacles. You will put off the old man and be reborn from his ashes; you will put on Our Lord Jesus with new ardour, like generous and strong eagles, nourished by the*

***divine Blood, at the very source of our adorable Heart, you will soar in your celestial flight, saying with our holy Founder: My God and my everything! Here I am ; here we are without delay, without reserve, without return, out of love for you!***

*I have just quoted the motto of our Father!*

(To the Fathers & Brothers of America, Betharram, 18/12/1886)

***Quam bonum, etc... How good and how pleasant it is for Brothers to dwell together, in perfect union in the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. [...]***

*We very firmly hope, from the infinite goodness of the Heart of Jesus and from the all-powerful intercession of Our Lady of Calvary, that, each day more faithful to the grace of your vocation, each day more docile to the voice of the spirit of Strength and Love, you will take and embrace with increasing ardour the gentle and light yoke of the Lord, and that by your courage, your generosity, your perseverance in the good and legitimate fight, you will support, you will console his holy Church and its August Head among the cruel trials of the present hour, and will thus merit, for you and many others, the crown of eternal rewards.*

*All yours in our Lord.*

(Circular letter, 23 June 1876)

## Conclusion : God is Love and who loves is born from God (1 Jn 4,7)

We are immersed in a motion of love preceding and transcending us. This movement has its origin in Trinity.

*How well I know that fountain's rushing flow  
Although by night.*

*Its deathless spring is hidden. Even so  
Full well I guess from whence its sources flow  
Though it be night.  
[...]*

*Its origin (since it has none) none knows:  
But that all origin from it arose  
Although by night.*

*I know there is no other thing so fair  
And earth and heaven drink refreshment there  
Although by night.  
[...]*

(Saint John of the Cross, *How well I know that fountain*)

Trinity is a community of love, in which the Father is for ever devoted to the Son and accepts the Son's gift, which makes him Father. And the Son is for ever devoted to the Father and accepts his gift, which makes him his Son. And the reciprocal gift from Father to Son and from Son to Father is the Holy Spirit : Father's love for the Son and Son's love for the Father. There is an internal communication of gifts or of life between the two persons of the Trinity. This is why we can say that God is Love.

*"Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what a model for a community! These three persons, though perfectly distinct in themselves, are nevertheless united*

*and act in the same fashion, in the same thought, in the same will, in the same operation forming one perfect and adorable society.” (MS.129-130. cf.RL 93)*

This trinitarian love decides to communicate to the other outside the communion of the three persons and does it through creating everything and the Human Being. The Trinity decides to create the Human Being by communicating him his image and resemblance : he is created as an individual and social being, so that each person communicates to the other by giving oneself to the others and accepts the others’ gift for oneself. *“This elevation through grace we owe to Christ's elevation on the cross. According to the eternal designs of fatherly love, in the mystery of the Redemption, the one is achieved through the other and in no other way; only through the other. Therefore, it is achieved eternally, since the love of the Father and the gift of the Son are eternal. It is also achieved in time: the cross on Calvary in fact means a concrete moment in the history of mankind.”* (John Paul II, Homily in Lujan, 11 June 1982).

The human being is made in such a way that he needs to communicate all his goods, material and spiritual, to help the others be better, and enrich himself by the others’ gifts communicated by dialogue, service and love. Our person evolves and ripens such as we received it from God, so God has made us and loved us , according to our opening to communicate our own gift and accepting the gift communicated by the others.

This gift and mutual acceptance allow the meeting between persons, divine as well as human. When I have accepted something from you, something from you is in me, and when you have accepted something from me, something from me is in you. And in all fields and relationships : with God, with the parents, the children, the brothers, the engaged couples, the married people, the friends and even the enemies...For, whatever the domain ,love is a similar experience and it is not made of different experiences. It creates an independence between us, without suppressing our liberty. What is sure is that when I open to communicate my goods, by giving as well as receiving them, I will enrich myself through

meetings, until I reach a full, final communication with the God of Love when 'He will be everything in all ». If I do not accept this dynamic of love, I run the risk of being frustrated, not because an oger would want to condemn me, but because I have lacked wisdom to answer the being I received from God, who has not created me perfect, but has deposited in me the abilities to enable me to open myself to this mutual communication allowing me to blossom and grow in life.

Jesus is revealing the Father's Love and the way the human persons have been created according to his image and resemblance for communicating the goods mutually. He experimented this communication of goods in Trinitarian life and in human relations . He totally gave his life on the Cross to save us and he received life fully in his resurrection by the Father's Spirit. He did not consider as a privilege to equal God and he became one of us. He crossed the world while making good to everyone. But he himself accepted the goods Mary and Joseph were communicating to him in their family relationships in Nazareth ; he was known as the carpenter's son, something of Joseph was in him ; he accepted to be welcomed in the homes of Peter, Martha and Mary, Zacchaeus, Simon the Pharisian, because « *the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head* » (Mt 8,20). He accepted the gifts of « *the women who followed him and served him by taking out of their resources* ».

He accepted to be invited to a wedding in Cana, he accepted to be ointed with costly perfumes by the woman who was a sinner and by Mary, and he accepted to be helped by Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross. He accepted the vinegar when he was thirsty on the cross. Thus he revealed to us that the Father was loving him since the beginning and that some people he had met and to whom he had given everything would communicate their goods to him, to allieve him from the hard human life.

Jesus, by his life, his passion, his death and resurrection, has restored our image and resemblance with the Creator, deteriorated by sin. He has communicated the Holy Spirit so that we may live in Love, in which we are created and to which we are destined. It is the "*law of charity that the*

*Holy Spirit habitually engraves in our hearts”* so that we may fully live in this movement of love in which we have been immersed since we were begotten and which makes more human a society which, in its dynamic, pushes us to think each one for himself.

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