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In this issue

As a last word before
the signal of
departure... p. 1

Feast of the baptism of
the Lord p. 4

From a Betharramite
brother in Morocco p. 5

Betharram, the place
where it all started p. 9

Youth Ministry:
questions, answers,
a few ideas p. 11

New Betharramite
finally professed &
priests in Thailand
p. 13

Bird's eye view p. 14

Notices p. 16

History of a spiritual
journey (I) p. 17

A WORD BY THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

As a last word before the signal for departure...

*Come on, let us go, my Etincelle!
What are you waiting for? This is the voice
of the Lord; He has spoken... Woe to those
who waver! Let us go, let us fly!... This is
peace, this is happiness.
(in Barbé's log)*

Dear Betharramites,

At the beginning of 2018, we look to new horizons with the strength of the missionary spirit that characterises us. And I would like us to take the time to look at ourselves to really understand who we are. We are at the start of a "pilgrimage", our backpacks will soon be closed, and we will give each other the last word of encouragement before we start. We will march in the same direction, respecting one another's differences of rhythm, style and character. We want to live together a prophetic experience that leads us to the goal. We want to arrive!

Betharram is today, in the Church, a Congregation that changes from year to year. It is a family of pilgrims. Its transformation becomes palpable and visible. We walk with the laity, with the people of God.

I propose today to begin with an aspect of our life that cannot go unnoticed: the "small number" of religious in our "little family". During the last chapter, Fr. Gaspar shared this thought with us: "We are not a congregation in the process of extinction. However, we cannot boast about growth either, given the high number of elderly religious, given that vocations have failed for a whole generation (the middle generation) and are lacking in Europe. But humanly and

culturally, Betharram is more diverse and richer than ever. "True, the Congregation today has about 275 members scattered over four continents, among which there is a growing small cohort of young religious. Indeed, nearly 120 religious are under 50 years old. In addition, 50 of them have been ordained priests and 2 religious brothers have been consecrated over the past seven years: not to be sneezed at ...! On the other hand, the age group of 50-70 years is poorly represented (about 60 religious in total). It is therefore in the field of support, co-responsibility and maturity that the greatest number of Betharramites are missing ... A situation that only time can reverse.

Finally, we have a large number (about 95) of veteran and elderly religious, between 70 and 100 years old. Many of them have played an important role in guiding the life and mission of the Congregation; they were given the opportunity to be formed and to form their brothers. 75% of them are in Europe (mainly in France and Italy).

It's hard to pinpoint the characteristics of every age group, and that's not necessarily important here. What is important is that we know who we are in this new beginning, 2018 and that we are preparing accordingly to "go out together to embrace life". Generational differences are not a great problem in our family, and I would prefer to emphasise them as a gift. There is certainly a diversity that is sometimes significant in the formation and culture of our brothers. But many aspects unite us, the first being the experience of the God of Love, the ardour of ministry, the witness to joy, the respect for elders and the obedience in the simple things of life. It is a grace to

note that Betharramites feel that they are members of the same family, despite the great differences that distinguish us from each other.

We know that no religious chooses those with whom he lives, because the community is the result of each member's faith response to the sending of his superiors. It is about being ready to share the same vocation and the same mission. What would have happened to many of us if we had not met in our community experience an elderly father or a mature Betharramite who helped us grow up, sometimes even from our childhood or from our youth ...?

It is also very remarkable that today there are missionary projects of the Congregation where the presence of experienced fathers is reduced or non-existent. Our communities are missing these religious very much!

One example is Thailand, where only two of the old missionaries (both Italian) remain today; another example is that of Côte d'Ivoire, with only two French fathers. Much more obvious is the case of India where no foreign Betharramite resides in a stable way and where the young religious are much more numerous. In these countries, young religious live their missionary 'sending out' with great enthusiasm, but frequently suffer from a lack of counsel, time for reflection, community discernment and the vocational richness that older and older religious bring in general. [Just by the way would a "mature" Betharramite be ready to offer his services as a missionary here...?]

In other places, such as the Central African Republic and the Holy Land, there is a mixture of experience and youth. The challenge is to know how

to evolve, transcending personal and cultural differences.

However, in France and Italy, where the average age is very high (over 70 years) and where the lack of vocations is a worrying factor, the desire is often expressed that we need young people to come and occupy empty rooms and fill the seats at the dinner table ... In America too the panorama has changed. With the return to the House of the Father of many missionaries and religious of the countries concerned over the last 12 years, the average age has significantly decreased. Some recent ordinations and professions have also rejuvenated vicariates and the Region, and this means that there will be a more homogeneous generational panorama in the years to come.

However, this generational dialectic gives rise to two opposing tendencies. The first is older, and seeks to respond to what is written in history, defining itself from works, structures, sources of rich experiences and personal achievements, but is certainly more resistant to change and openness to new missions. The other trend, corresponding to a younger reality, appears more active and available, but is always looking for new experiences and a permanent renewal. It is a group that rejects the ancient heritage, its "museums and buildings", and is reluctant to continue to do "what has always been done so" ... Many pay the price of inexperience, others have a weak sense of belonging ... Who knows? Perhaps they missed the mature religious who would have helped them love the Congregation as it is and helped them to transcend the frantic pastoral activism of the early years of ministry?

Nevertheless, the common life of these two realities continues to be blessed

by the human and spiritual quality of our brothers, although we must recognise that it runs the risk of becoming superficial if a real discernment in community is not properly led. For this, everyone must be co-responsible for supporting community spaces of faith and life as an integral part of our lifestyle.

Finally, the worldly spirit that can creep into our communities: a lack of religious spirit or an exhibitionism that devalues the witness of some religious. These are a cause for some concern; along with fear of the future and a self-referentiality as a form of ego-defence. Lack of joy is an attitude that accompanies some older religious and has them unconsciously running away from vocations instead of attracting vocations.

A long road is opening up for us towards the future. We want to engage with it by presenting these considerations before departure, as a sort of roadmap.

It is true that there is much work to do and that we are not numerous, but it is precisely by helping one another, by the witness of happy religious, that we will be able to reach our goal which will draw nearer each day. Today we are called to resist being tempted by things that are not the fruit of the "marvelous contemplation" of which St. Michael Garicoits spoke in the Founding Text of 1838. The wonderful and definitive gesture of Jesus, humble and obedient, invited us to give "for all our life" and in a personal way a generous, energetic response, occasionally heroic but always treasured in the eyes of the God of Love. Are we ready to offer this answer together in this year 2018?

*Fr. Gustavo SCJ
Superior General*

Feast of the baptism of the Lord

CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS AND
ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT
OF BAPTISM TO NEW-BORN BABIES

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE
FRANCIS, SISTINE CHAPEL, SUNDAY, 8
JANUARY 2017



ceremony. I would like to tell you only this: safeguard the faith; make it grow, so it may be testimony for others.

Dear parents,

You have asked for faith for your children, the faith that will be bestowed in Baptism. Faith: this means a life of faith, because faith is lived; walking on the path of faith and giving testimony of faith. Faith is not reciting the "Creed" on Sunday, when we go to Mass; it is not only this. Faith is believing what is the Truth: God the Father who sent his Son and the Spirit that enlivens us. But faith is also entrusting oneself to God, and this you must teach them, with your example, with your life. And, faith is light: in the ceremony of Baptism you will be given a lighted candle, as in the early days of the Church. For this reason Baptism, in those days, was called 'illumination' because faith illuminates the heart; it shows things in a different light. You have asked for faith: the Church gives faith to your children with Baptism, and you have the task of making it grow, safeguarding it, so that it may become testimony for all others. This is the meaning of this

Then ... the concert has begun! [babies cry]. It is because the babies are in a place they don't know; they have gotten up earlier than usual. One starts, gives the note and then the others "mimic" Some cry simply because the other has cried.... Do you know that Jesus did the same? I like thinking that Jesus' first sermon in the stable was a cry, the first.... Then, since the ceremony is rather long, some cry out of hunger. If this is the case, you mothers, feel free to nurse them, without worry, completely as usual. As Our Lady nursed Jesus....

Don't forget: you have asked for faith; it is your task to safeguard the faith, make it grow, so it may be testimony for all of us, for all of us: even for us clergymen, priests, bishops, everyone. Thank you.



From a Betharramite Brother in Morocco

As a Brother, I will try to share with you the joys of my Ministry as Bishop in Morocco.

Firstly, looking back quickly over my life, I can see that, without my noticing it, the Lord had been leading me to this since birth; Indeed, to practise an Episcopal ministry in Morocco, you need to know a little bit about the world of Islam, you also need to know how to be able to be the Church in such a context; and all this was given to me by my family history and my first years of ministry as a young priest, director of the School Charles de Foucauld in Casablanca. I experienced many highlights of the history of Morocco: the Protectorate, Independence in 1956, the attacks of Shirhat and Kenitra (in 72 and 73), (which led to the Moroccanisation in many sectors, even in our schools) the years of leadership of the age of His Majesty Hassan II, and the arrival of His Majesty Mohammed VI; since I returned to Morocco just after him in the year 2000. So as a Bishop I did not arrive in a world unknown to me.- and yet Morocco in 1956 had just 9 million inhabitants all Muslims; today they are 36 million; and in that time this country has greatly developed.- but also the Church I was sent to pastor was no longer the Church of my childhood and my early years of ministry. (In 1956, we were 500,000 Christians of 4 nationalities, and today I find myself in a Church of 30,000 Catholics of more than 100 different nationalities)... what discoveries then,

and what joys! What invitation to creativity! Our Christian community is scattered throughout the diocese, in an area larger than Italy; and moreover it is a very young Christian community of average age 35 and it grows by a quarter every year.

But the wide-ranging responsibilities given me by the Congregation had opened me to the universal (And after 17 years of episcopacy, my 'universal' has grown even bigger!). All this reappraisal, I did after my appointment, giving thanks for so many benefits.

But if I said YES to the call of Pope John Paul II, it is thanks to Saint Michael. Is not the Pope our first Superior? ... so I could not refuse this act of obedience ... even though it upset a lot of planning especially in the middle of the school year. And I found myself in this country where Charles de Foucauld experienced his conversion to Jesus Christ when he saw the Muslims praying; living then a total abandonment. "Father, do with me what you will," was I so far away from St. Michael?

My first memory as a bishop is the unforgettable welcome I received from all my brother priests. From the first day, they were all there to welcome me, some having travelled more than 1000 kms to be there. I was greeted with great trust, even though for many of them I was a stranger.

My other great grace at the beginning of episcopate is to have been coadjutor for a little more than

a year. Thus, I learned the “job” alongside an elder who helped me understand all the ins and outs of our Church. So when I made mistakes, he was there to pick up the pieces.

It was then that I discovered that the first ministry of a bishop is a ministry of communion. First the communion of priests among themselves, because out of 25 priests in the diocese, none were incardinated, they were all ‘on loan’ from religious congregations (Franciscans or Salesians) and some priests were “fidei donum”. There were Europeans, South and North Americans, Filipinos, Sub-Saharan. It was not always easy, but we had the slogan “we are priests in Morocco for Jesus Christ and Morocco”. This same process of communion had to be done also with the nuns and the laity. But because of the “turnover” of personnel, it was necessary to start again each year. I couldn’t ‘settle’ in the episcopate. I was practically the only permanent priest for several years!

This ministry of communion extended to all the bishops of the Maghreb in our Episcopal Conference (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya). You can imagine the last meeting of our Conference where for the first time, our brother bishop of Libya (who is alone with two priests), gave us such a strong witness of courage and self-denial. But there was also communion with all the bishops of Africa by participating in the SCEAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar). It caused

me to journey all over Africa for 10 years representing our conference. We did not all have the same pastoral perspectives, but our presence made us aware of the importance of the presence of the Church in Muslim worlds. It also allowed me to make my brother bishops aware of the presence of countless students and sadly countless migrants who cross our country.

Thus, as I explained to our Pope Francis, during our last ad limina visit that our Maghreb Church has three important peripheries in the today’s world.

1. Sub-Saharan students looking to the Church for a father and a mother (some of them are barely 18 years old); I tried to play this role, adding a liturgical act to any celebration, especially when I had the cross and the mitre. At least for 45 minutes, all of them wanted to be photographed with me; It was a way of showing them my affection. And in 17 years of episcopacy, I can say that my photo must be in all African countries in one way or another!
 2. The encounter between Christians with Muslims; Muslims are now beginning to take the initiative in this dialogue.
 3. The presence of migrants that we must accompany and help as much as possible, reinforcing the life-giving work of Caritas.
- It is in relation to these three

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peripheries that our pastoral ministry was called to be constructed. And it is in the heart of these peripheries that I discovered the joy of being a bishop. With the students, as I said, the joy of photography, but also to see the simplicity and the humility with which they spoke to me ... I learned many things with them ... and they are not 'formulas', but their lives are made up of so many

questions, so much suffering that often I have no answers to make, but I had a duty to listen to them. And after these times of listening to terrible suffering, I could only give thanks for their strength, and for daring to speak to their bishop. For many it was new. Not long ago, I was at the table with a group of young students and at the end, a young Malagasy immediately phoned his parents: "you know, I just ate in the kitchen with the Archbishop". His joy was more than visible. And it was with all this joy surrounding me that I made a point of going to celebrate mass each Sunday in a different town, despite the kilometres! I witnessed so many praying communities, who were happy to have a father who listened to them and invited them to communion around Christ.

How beautiful are all these choirs that help us to pray, to resonate with

our whole being and to rise to the Lord. All this generates communion.

And my greatest joy was undoubtedly last Christmas, when I did not know yet that I had a successor, midnight mass with 1500 people,

mostly sub-Saharan. Where else will I find such spiritual vibration? And the day after Christmas I was in the prison to celebrate mass with 200 prisoners.

Ordinary mass (in French, Italian, Spanish, English), and while I was putting on my alb a prisoner came to whisper in my ear asking me for a blessing and after him, 200 came, one after the other. A spontaneous liturgical procession. What a balm for the heart!

But as the evangelist says, there would not be enough books to write all that I have contemplated in the wonders of God.

Since I resigned, I had asked the (Betharram) Regional whether he would accept me again in the Congregation; his answer was more than spontaneous. So it is with joy that I put myself in his hands after taking a little rest, (because anxiety has taken its toll and I feel my body needs some recovery). But above all, I have better understood all this time the importance of the spiritual life. That's why I would like to spend



a month alone for God. To try to immerse myself freely in the Heart of God. I have spoken so much about it, so I must now let my words enter my inner being. This new experience of God will be illuminated by all the people I have encountered, by all these human realities crossed, by all those socio-politico-economic and religious events that mark so many countries. And I cannot thank Pope Francis enough for all his homilies at "St. Martha", and all his speeches during his many trips to the most vulnerable. All his words went straight to my heart. Thanks to him I really learned to be a priest and a bishop according to the heart of God. Also following his example, "I want to put on my shoes and get out of my couch" I only asked one condition at Provincial level: to be in a place not far away from a cardiologist! I wish to find the Congregation again. That's true; I've always joyfully remembered you all on every Betharram feast day. I was happy to hear news from you; but I missed a real community life, even though I mixed with all the communities of the diocese that were so happy to welcome me; but they were not my cradle. And now I would like to continue living my Episcopal motto "listen". Because through all that I have seen, all that I heard, I sense how many people are thirsty to be listened to.

I do not know when I will be able to leave Morocco, because my successor (Cristóbal López Romero) would like me to stay as long as possible with him. It's strange that we have a similar history; he is also

a religious (Salesian), he has also been a Provincial (Paraguay, Bolivia & Spain), and he has also been a headmaster of a school and college. So I pass the flame to him with great joy and confidence in the future of our Church in Morocco.

May thanks be given to the Lord

+ Vincent LANDEL s.c.j.

Betharram, the place where it all started

Orientation VI of the last General Chapter under the magnifying glass of our Superior General Emeritus. ●●●

The 2011 General Chapter called for the creation of a study commission on the difficult issue of the buildings on the Betharram site. Thanks to the work of this commission, the Congregation managed to recover the property that had been sheltered by the Pyrenean Association since 1907; an economic affairs team was set up within the Vicariate and support was provided for the renewal of the Betharram College, etc. In my report to the Chapter, I also expressed this concern in chapter five of the first part (see On the issue of the Betharram site). I remember how much I loved going to Betharram in the 1960s. It was full of life: the General Council was there, the Provincial Council, the missionary community, the religious community of the college; the sanctuaries of Notre-Dame and Saint-Michael were well led. Today there are only two communities, that of the Residence of the elderly fathers and that of Notre Dame. It consists of two French religious, one of the Vicariate of France-Spain, and temporarily, two religious of other vicariates in initial formation, a religious from Côte d'Ivoire who came to study. Lack of continuity makes this community very fragile.

The new vocations are the reward of the missionary spirit that has characterised French Betharramites

from the beginnings until today who carried the charism to almost all the fifteen countries where we are present today. The Italians, the English and the Spaniards have cultivated the missionary spirit and it remains essential today to our identity. If the abundance of vocations in Europe has projected our mission to places that did not know the Gospel, the abundance of these vocations in the new realities must keep alive this missionary spirit, leaving their lands (coming out) to come to strengthen the most significant communities so that the Gospel continues to flourish in old Europe. One of these communities is Betharram.

The Chapter spells out that we need to build a religious and missionary community in Betharram and how to do it. This community will have to develop a community and missionary project with the elements provided by the General Chapter, the orientations of the Superior General, the challenges of the society in which it is located and also the guidelines of the Bayonne Diocese. All the religious who form this community must participate in the development of this project, with the support of the regional superior and the vicar for France and Spain.

The Chapter did not pronounce on the mission of this community. Some people think that this community of Betharram must have a parish mission so that incoming religious find a pastoral work that seems attractive

to them. But in a parish, religious run the risk of settling down, dividing the team and weakening the missionary dynamic that would be stronger if all remained in Betharram.

Others think that the community must live in Betharram and from there radiate like the missionaries of the time of Saint Michael to the surrounding countryside: to Betharram College and other Catholic colleges of the region, to the retirement home of Betharram and other retirement homes in the area, with a missionary project to propose to the Bishop of Bayonne and Tarbes and the priests of the two dioceses. This missionary project

would be more in keeping with the charism of Betharram and the desire for the type of Church called for by Pope Francis. Another aspect of the mission would be to spiritually animate Betharram with services of spiritual exercises, spiritual accompaniment and to receive pilgrims to the Sanctuaries with quality.

To improve Betharram and make it more attractive, we will need to demolish, restore and improve the buildings. For that we need money. The Vicariate of France-Spain does not have many resources. This project around the Betharram site, approved by the last General Chapter, is the responsibility of everyone.

The Superior General with his

Council will coordinate the availability of religious and ask obedience from them. He will also ensure that all the vicariates collaborate in the improvement of the place, according to their economic capabilities. Priority will be given to the Chapel of St. Michael Garicoits and the so-called Monastery. Betharram can recover its beauty, life and dynamism for mission and for religious and lay people to feel at home.



Betharram is part of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation because it is the geographical reference of our charism. It was in Betharram that St. Michael Garicoits spent most of his life. It was there

that he witnessed some bishops in tears. It was there that the Holy Spirit inspired him with the charism of the Sacred Heart. It was there that he received his first companions and it is from here that he founded colleges throughout the Basque country and the Bearn. It was from Betharram, the Basque country and the Bearn that the missionaries left to go on mission. It was there that St. Michael Garicoits trained teachers and missionaries. It was from Betharram that the missionaries left in 1856 for Argentina. It was at Betharram that St. Michael Garicoits died in 1863 and where his body remains.

It is from Betharram that we were scattered to be sown in 1903 in

Italy, Spain, England and Belgium. The Congregation was governed from Betharram until 1968, with the exception of a short period of exile in Irun (from 1903 to 1915). From Betharram, the missionaries were sent to China, then to Thailand and Ivory Coast... Betharram is still

today a place of formation for the young religious who finish their initial formation. Betharram is the home of all religious and lay people who share our charism...

Gaspar Fernandez Perez scj

LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

Youth Ministry: questions, answers, a few ideas

The meeting of young religious of the Saint Michael Garicoits Region was held in Betharram from Wednesday 27 to Friday 29, December 2017. Fathers: Simone Panzeri, François Tohonon, Gerard Zugaramurdi, Davi Lara, Vincent Worou, Marius Angui, and Brothers Emile Garat and Habib Yalouwassi were present in this meeting. ●●●

We started the first day with Father Laurent who helped us to enter into the matter by suggesting some reflections based on the letter 163 of St Michael and inviting us to share our thoughts. Then Father Gérard, the moderator, announced the first theme: "Exchanges and expectations: why are we there? What do we want to live?" It emerged from our discussions that we were there to live a fraternal moment of joy, then to hear the feelings of the young people themselves and finally to develop a youth ministry carried out by Betharram.

In the afternoon, we exchanged on the theme: "Work on Orientation IV of the 2017 General Chapter, go out to share the joy: presentation and application to our reality". It was an occasion for us to share the story of our first contacts with Betharram, to rediscover those moments of joy and simplicity that led us to choose Betharram. In fact, we lived moments of joy in our communities and in our pastoral environments. We have not concentrated, however, on the importance of this joy for ourselves and for the people we minister. Thus, lay people were disappointed by the welcome or lack of joy of some Betharramite religious. This is why we stressed the importance of joy in the religious himself, in order to share it both in his meetings with his brothers in the community and with the world outside. And above all, we need to make our communities more welcoming.

The second day was a time for an

exchange with two young people: Elodie, a former student of Betharram College and currently studying at the university, and Jacques, who is in a period of training. Both are active members of "Jeunes en chemin", a group accompanied by Bro. Emile in Pau. By dealing with the topic: "youth, faith, commitment", they highlighted that young people today are more interested in their future life than in a religious or Christian life; moreover, they like to be concrete. It is to say that young people see themselves in day-to-day actions of charity. And they deem it important to feel fully responsible in this matter. And yet, they have a tendency to play second fiddle. For example, in small groups, all the members will be happy to follow a charismatic leader in all their charity activities. But if there is no leader, the members will not be active.

The taste for tele-reality, lack of patience and perseverance are other aspects highlighted. However, our younger guests acknowledged that, in the face of current news, they like to talk about religion. In brief, to encourage the commitment of young people today in our pastoral care, we need to gain their trust, to show them our presence, to know how to listen to

them."What pastoral projects need to be put in place? is the question addressed in the afternoon. Our proposals are:

- That the question of the vocation is not left to the religious in charge, but that it is carried out by all members of the community; and we have to help the religious entrusted with this responsibility;
- Once a month, plan a prayer time in the spirit of the monthly leaflet sent on 14th of every month, and the Mass of the day on which we pray for vocations;
- A more significant presence in the pastoral care at Betharram College; that the leaders be involved in this pastoral care (reflections are in progress);
- A presence in the chaplaincy of the University of Pau;
- The testimony of our religious life to the young people whom we welcome and encounter;
- Make a special space on the vo-



cation in the Sanctuary of Betharram;-
G a t h e r
young people for a week-end around our brothers who come for the international session in Betharram;

- The participation and the support of the Katiola project for its success and then take steps for oth-

er future experiences with young people;

- Proposals for the upcoming meeting in Italy at Pistoia for a report and plan to meet also the youth.

These three days were also moments of prayer with the community

that welcomed us, a time of adoration and a Eucharistic celebration at the retirement home of the elderly fathers, a way of sharing with them our joy!

Habib Yelouwassi scj

New Betharramite finally professed and priests in Thailand

After the Indian Vicariate who celebrated new professions and ordinations to the diaconate at the end of the past year, it is the turn of our communities of Thailand to rejoice on January 12th and 13th for two important celebrations:

- the final professions of two brothers, Br. Stephen Banjerd Chuensuklerttaweekul and Br. Andrew Manop Kaengkhaio, and

- the ordination to priesthood of Dn. Alfonso Prasert Pitakkiriboon and Dn John Bosco Sommai Sopa-Opaad.

Fr. Austin Hughes scj, Regional Superior of the Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, initially delegated by the Superior General to receive the vows, was held in England and had to give up his journey.

The General Vicar, Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj, went thus (for the first time) to Thailand in order to receive the final vows of our young brothers. There could not be any better occasion in order to discover the riches and the vitality of our Thai communities under the guidance of the Regional Vicar, Fr Chan Kunu.



Br. Stephen Banjerd and Br. Andrew Manop: *"Our vocation came from the kindness and generosity of the Betharram's missionary, that inspired us to join Betharram. We are very thankful to God who sent them to our villages."*



REGION ST MICHAEL GARICOITS

FRANCE ^{SPAIN} CÔTE D'IVOIRE
ITALY CENTRAL AFRICA HOLY LAND

Regional noviciate

On Friday, December 22, 2017, after a time of retreat (Monday, 18 - Friday, 22) guided by Father Jean-Paul, Novice Master, there took place the rite of entry to the novitiate of Jean-Claude and Hyacinthe.

After the Word of God at the evening prayer, Father Jean-Paul took the floor to read from the Betharram Rule of Life article 145 concerning the formation during the novitiate.

Then the novices were introduced and welcomed for the beginning of the canonical year 2017-2018.

After that, each novice read out the biblical verse chosen to be an inspiration throughout this canonical year; a prayer of Thanksgiving and Surrendering concluded the rite.

Then the Novice master handed to each novice the Spiritual Doctrine of Saint Michael, the emblem of the novitiate, and subsequently he invited the novices and the other brothers, who came to support their younger brothers, to sign the register. At this event we were glad to have with us



Father Felet (regional vicar for the Holy Land), brother Severino, Father Firmin, Father Jose and brother Joseph. We wish all the best to our Novices. Always forward!



REGION V. FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA ^{URUGUAY} BRAZIL
PARAGUAY

Brazil

"But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

This was the Bible quotation chosen by Deacon Jeferson Silvério Gonzaga SCJ, a Betharramite religious of the Vicariate of Brazil, for his priestly ordination that took place on December 16 at the parish church of his hometown, Carmo de Minas, located just over 400 kilometers from Belo Horizonte, south of the State of Minas Gerais.

The rite of ordination was presided by the Auxiliary Bishop of Belo Horizonte, Mgr. Geovane Luís da Silva, and concelebrated by Fr. Daniel González SCJ, Regional Superior, and by all the members of his Council; also present were many Betharramite religious priests, several diocesan priests and priests of other religious congregations. The solemn event was attended by a large assembly of faithful, many of whom came from other places: from São Paulo and Paulínia (São Paulo), from Sabará, from Belo Horizonte, from Brumadinho and from Passa Quatro (Minas Gerais) and from Serrinha (Bahia).

In his homily, Bishop Geovane spoke about the dignity of the priestly



ministry and the mission of the priest who must always be in union with the Church. As for the newly-ordained priest, in a very emotional address at the end of the celebration, he thanked God, the Bishop, the parish priest of Carmo de Minas, the Congregation, his parents Doña Ángela and Don Afonso, the family and friends who accompanied his vocational journey and helped him in the preparation of his ordination.



**REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS
CRUCIFIED**
ENGLAND INDIA
THAILAND

Thailand

Double celebration at the community of Huay Bong on Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 December: 60 years of the beginning of the mission (started by Fr. Fognini scj in 1957) and the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Ugo Donini scj.

The grand celebration - after days of preparation by the villagers, - began on the evening of Tuesday, December 26th with the celebration of the Mass presided by the Regional Vicar of Thailand, Fr. John Chan Kunu scj. Then the celebration continued outside with songs and dances performed by both local people and

groups from nearby villages.

On the morning of Wednesday, December 27, the Bishop of Chiang Mai, Mgr Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana, opened the solemn and final celebration for Fr. Ugo Donini on his 50th anniversary of priestly ordination.

The day ended with the community lunch.



In memoriam

On December 18, Mr. Primo Urbani, aged 88, returned to the Father's house. Mr. Primo was brother of Fr. Arialdo Urbani scj (from the community of Niem - Vicariate of the Central African Republic) and Br. Severino Urbani scj (from the community of Bethlehem - Vicariate of the Holy Land). We entrust him to the Father's mercy and we assure Fr. Arialdo, Br. Severino and their family members that we will remember their dear one in our prayer.

On 21 December, in Worcester (England) Mr. John Leighton, father of Br Patrick Leighton SCJ (of the community of Great Barr, residence of Droitwich - England) has died. He was 93 years old. While we entrust him to the mercy of the Father, we embrace Br Patrick and his family in this time of trial.

In the special session of the General Council on January 7th, the Superior General approved the restructuring of the Vicariate of Thailand into 6 communities and the appointment of 5 superiors of community:

Community of Chiang Mai – Huay Tong
Superior: Fr. Pornchai Gabriel Sukjai for a first mandate from January 7th 2018

Community of Maepon
Superior: Fr. Suthon Khiriwathanasakun for a first mandate from January 7th 2018

Community of Chomtung – Khun Pae
Superior: P. Tidkham Michael Jailertrit for a first mandate from January 7th 2018

Community of Huay Bong – Mungngam
Superior: P. Chokdi John Damronganurak for a first mandate from January 7th 2018

Community of Ban Pong – Phayao
Superior: P. Chan John Kunu scj for a first mandate from January 7th 2018

Community of Sampran
Superior: Fr. Peter Phairote Nochatchawan (running mandate since 2016)

<<< On the agenda

- From January 9 to 25 Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue, General Vicar, is in Thailand in order to receive the final vows of Br. Stephen Banjerd Chuensuklerttaweekul and of Br. Andrew Manop Kaengkhaio and to take part in the ordination to priesthood of Br. Alfonso Prasert Pitakkiriboon and to Br. John Bosco Sommai Sopa-Opaad.
- From January 15 to 24 Fr. Graziano Sala, General Bursar, is visiting the religious of Ho Chi Minh City community that is directly under the care of the General Council.
- Meetings called by the Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín, at the Generalate in Rome:
 - The Council of the Congregation (from January 29 to February 2).
 - A plenary session of the General Council (February 3).
 - Betharramite Service of Formation (from 5 to 10 February).

Our starting point: the French Revolution

This year, in our monthly appointment with history, we will follow in the footsteps of our founder, through the discovery, the confirmation and the development of his vocation... until holiness!... always together with our faithful storyteller, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart scj. ...



THE HISTORY OF THE HISTORIANS

Michael Garicoïts was born during the troubled times of the Revolution

Everyone knows that history can not be reduced to short stories, to anecdotes; even if these are not insignificant ones. It has been a long time since Michael Garicoïts' biography was written! Would there be anything to add, to correct? Everything has been said and well said! Everything is worth remembering!

And yet nuances, precisions are useful, sometimes necessary; to situate the elements in their time and, thereby, allow everyone to be in his time and in his world!

Father Miéyaa recalls in 1878, "the first biography of Father Michel Garicoïts was established to prove that this priest was a valid candidate for beatification and canonization"; Father Etchécopar entrusted this mission to Father Basilide Bourdenne and he could not speak of the disagreement between Michael Garicoïts and his bishop: Mgr Lacroix was still

there and it needed his authorization to publish the work ...

Three years after the centenary of the founder's death (14 May 1863), Father Duvernau wrote The saint who died at dawn: the intention remained to give an example of holiness.

So what of the 1,844 pages of Father Miéyaa, The Life of St. Michael Garicoïts (in 1977)? The author wanted to "situate [the saint] in history". He says: "In these pages, gold and lead, plaster and granite accumulate. This is needed in a building of holiness. This Life is the best source for knowing the founder of the Bétharram religious community: precious indications, precise notes. It contains some uncertainties and remains a hagiography: Father Miéyaa always speaks of "Saint Michael Garicoïts", as if he were born holy, the mischievous child who his mother continually brought back to the right path!

Let's ignore those who invent beautiful stories ... One assures that Arnaud Garicoïts went to ask Gratianna's father for the hand of his daughter when he had been long dead... When Michel was ordained priest, another biographer saw his parents and even his grandmother in the front row of the cathedral; except that it is possible that no one came from Ibarre, and especially not the grandmother, who had been dead for ten years ...

"Michel Garicoïts was born during the troubled times of the French Rev-

olution”: that is true! Often we see a cohort of villains opposing Catholic priests and the faithful. Can we say more? Of course! The Revolution has roots ...

THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION

At the end of the 18th century, people were suffering. For over a hundred years the people paid dearly for the wars of Louis XIV and Louis XV, kings of divine right. The nobility added tax to taxes; the bishops and canons were similar: in 1789, all bishops were nobility! Successive poor harvests made life more difficult: could the common people tolerate everything? It is said that the people had strong faith; but the ideas of the philosophers - Voltaire, Rousseau, and the others - spread to the edge of the provinces; monasteries closed due to lack of recruits; vocations to the priesthood diminished...

In 1789 Louis XVI united the States

General of France; for the first time since 1615! There was great hope: the peasants expected a reduction of seigneurial rights; the bourgeois wanted more equality; some nobles and parish priests understood the people ... Each region chose its deputies; but they did not always follow the desires of those who elected them; and some, disappointed, returned home quickly...

THE SITUATION IN IBARRE

Ibarre is neither in Labourd nor Bearn; but in Lower Navarre. King of France and of Navarre, Louis XVI summoned the States General. The Navarrese delegates noted that this assembly concerned France, not their country: so they went home! Too bad if they were to become French without wanting to ...

The Revolution then arrived in the Basque Country. Few priests submitted to the new law; others put away



their cassocks and became farmers, shoemakers, craftsmen, etc.; there were some who crossed the Pyrenees ... Here, faith and a sense of honour meant that people would not betray those who asked for a hiding place. So it was in Ibarre, both Garakotxea (where the Garicoïts were) and Ordokia (where Michael's mother was born): the first house was close to the mountain; the owner of the other had two brother priests, including the priest of Ibarre!

In early July 1792, nothing went well for the Revolution. All Europe wanted to see its end. No real army in France? What a nice inheritance! The Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia wanted Paris. The kings supported each other; those of France and Spain were of the Bourbon family. On 11 July, the National Legislative Assembly announced: "Citizens, the motherland is in danger! "; then it forced all those who could bear arms, to enlist. In 1793, Arnaud Garicoïts went off to fight against the Spaniards, to defend two neighbouring valleys.

The maternal uncle of Michel Garicoïts helped the brothers of the property owner in Ordokia to escape: Father Mieyaa tells us; and yet, relying on documents collected, he says:

"On 21 February 1796 Jean Etcheberry was reported to Larceveau with the municipality, the justice of the peace and twelve other citizens of the district, at the foot of the tree of freedom... to celebrate the feast of the just punishment of the last king of France. Every member present, in the presence of the people, declared themselves individually to be sincere-

ly attached to the Republic and swore eternal hatred to the monarchy. "

It can be assumed that the young man took this action to bring divert attention and thus better protect his clandestine activities ...

The events of the Revolution marked the lives of those around Michel Garicoïts: his mother, his grandmother, Mrs. Anguélu and all the others... It's good to remember this!

Beñat Oyhénart scj



At the beginning of this new year I feel more and more the need to recommend to you, to insist with your teachers on the following points. [...] God from whom all good comes requires instruments completely stripped, above all of self, entirely given in their hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit, to the law of love and of charity, that He usually engraves in our hearts and to the great law of obedience following the example of Jesus Himself. Spiritus Domini super me propter quod unxit me. The Spirit of God is in me since He has anointed me ... He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. All this can be expressed with the simple

words, 'Here I am'. If we do not wish to deny our profession of priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and put ourselves under the flag of Satan, all our conduct must respond to the Holy Spirit saying, 'Here I am, *without delay, without reserve, without return,* out of love for the Will of God, taking great care to accept all the means God and our superiors offer us to correct any defects in our unwitting conduct. *readily, unreservedly, irrevocably, lovingly* Either our profession to tend towards perfection, and to give ourselves unstintingly to others, is just fiction, or, we must do our best to practice this doctrine. | DS § 9



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