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A word from the superior general

Going out to share,
driven by a single love: Jesus Christ

Dear Betharramites,

In a world marked by a never ending desire for pleasure and by transient relationships that never seem to fully satisfy the human body and spirit, Betharramites, as consecrated persons, continue to insist on manifesting and imitating the lifestyle of the chaste Jesus.

We do it freely, because we are religious. We have made vows and we want to live them in all honesty. Is this a monumental task? A daydream? Or, it is part of our utopia?

We will try to reflect together on this starting with: "going out to share".

I often ask myself: how do young people in the world today value the authenticity and dedication of those who have made such a life choice? Certainly, the value of chastity is not fashionable, but it does have "something" that always attracts, perhaps because it is mysterious and challenging, as the disciples of Christ saw it. Yes, in truth, chastity demands a gift from God,

which must be discovered, taken care of throughout one's life and matured.

Unfortunately we religious tend to do it, however, by pretending to be more "normal" than we should. We risk exposing ourselves to living dangerously, like men who live in 'the world', and allow ourselves to be carried away by what is not right for us (cf. 1 Cor 10. 23). That is when our light becomes vague and then goes out altogether when the profound miseries of humanity are experienced too close to us. Then in the darkness of our foolishness, if the flickering light our fidelity does not go out altogether it is only because God does not want it.... (Cf. Isa 42: 3; Mt 12. 20).

On the contrary, in the midst of these ongoing challenges, the love of God is poured out with greater generosity and continues to make the beauty of the chaste life shine in many brother priests, religious and lay people that surround us, and also in the hearts of many Betharramites. Those who are quietly faithful in prayer, in asceticism, live inconspicuously in a healthy modesty and the world doesn't make a fuss of them. They go unnoticed.

Jesus was not valued for his celibacy either. People found this condition provocative, because it opposed what the cultural and social context demanded. Fertility was one of the quintessential signs of God's blessing (Deut 28.11; Ps 127 and 128). There was no previous

tradition that associated "virginity" with "holiness". On the contrary, sterility was considered a kind of divine curse (Gen 15. 2; Jer 22.30).

However, Jesus reveals that we are in the "already" of the promise (of the kingdom), and with him we need not wait. But this to many in his time seemed presumptuous. "*The time has been fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is near*" (Mk 1.15). Jesus does not explain celibacy from the functionality of his ministry. He has not chosen it because "that would leave him freer for the mission", but for a much deeper reason: his tender, mysterious and filial union with the Abba.

Jesus chooses to be celibate over other good and healthy dimensions of life. The Lord wanted to express in his life and in his flesh the presence of the Kingdom among us, he "*became a eunuch for the Kingdom*" (Mt 19.12). That was his way of feeling it and announcing it. With that fervour of passion and fidelity, Jesus "went out to share everything." He was exposed to being mistreated, suspected and discriminated against by a society, which in its own way, was as judgemental as the current one. His secret joy was in that particular relationship with his Father, whom he wanted in everything to please and obey, to serve everyone, especially the poorest.

St. Michael Garicoits, fascinated by the profound self-humbling of the Incarnate Word, saw himself as in debt to that exclusive love,

indispensable in vocations as "a secret spring" that moves our heart.

No. 40 of our Rule of Life says: *"In order to live love, following the example of Christ, we renew the offering of our lives every day. Thus we show to the Lord 'a spark of true love'. Being aware of our frailties and weaknesses with a lucid and serene humility, we correct and overcome 'the tendencies of human nature, wounded by sin', to grow in the imitation of Jesus meek and humble of heart (Mt 11.29). In the sacrament of Reconciliation, we celebrate the love of God the Saviour: 'Old heart, leave room for the Heart of Jesus. Take your place, Heart of Jesus'".*

Christ makes us co-responsible in this "substitution of the heart". God "needs" some things from us: our free cooperation, a memory that does not forget the graces, and a docility to the invitation of the Risen One: "go to Galilee"... the place of first love. May we never be reproached for having lost it! (Rev 2, 3-4).

Jesus descends tirelessly and mercifully to invite the crushed creature to live out of his tenderness. He does it like someone who feeds a bird with his hand. So he has done with us. The Lord has allowed us to taste the taste of chastity and invites us to take it, preserve it and grow in it. With the psalmist let us say: *"O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor haughty my eyes. I have not gone after things too great, nor marvels beyond me. Truly, I have set my soul*

in silence and peace. Like a weaned child on its mother breast, even so is my soul." (Ps 130. 1-2)

A chaste heart, is freer, does not judge or condemn, but understands and forgives. Enjoy the Peace of the encounter. It goes out of itself. It beats for a love that is born and always reborn. We are called to that.

Finally, I must say that chastity is for me an extremely "contagious" value. Surrounding yourself with chaste people "makes you chaste". Maybe some of you have had the grace to live with some Betharramites like this from "the first hour". They showed this value... Many today also remain a true sign of joy for their daily dedication to Christ.

Since we are men and not angels, "let us go out to share" and let this love speak to others about this mysterious happiness: that of existing only for Him.

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL

Address on the occasion of the apostolic journey to Morocco, Cathedral of Saint Peter, Rabat, 31 March 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters, bonjour à tous! [...]

Christians are a small minority in Morocco. Yet, to my mind, this is not a problem, even though I realize that at times it can be difficult for some of you. Your situation reminds me of the question asked by Jesus: *"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it?... It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened"* (Lk 13:18.21). Paraphrasing the Lord's words, we can ask ourselves: What are Christians like, in these lands? To what can we compare them? They are like a little yeast that Mother Church wants to mix in



with a great quantity of flour until all of it is leavened. For Jesus did not choose us and send us forth to become more numerous! He called us to a mission. He put us in the midst of society like a handful of yeast: the yeast of the Beatitudes and the fraternal love by which, as Christians, we can all join in making present his kingdom. In this context I recall the counsel of Saint Francis to his brothers as he sent them out: "Go out and preach the Gospel: and if necessary, also with words".

This means, dear friends, that our mission as baptized persons, priests and consecrated men and women, is not really determined by the number



or size of spaces that we occupy, but rather by our capacity to generate change and to awaken wonder and compassion. We do this by the way we live as disciples of Jesus, in the midst of those with whom we share our daily lives, joys and sorrows, suffering and hopes (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). In other words, the paths of mission are not those of proselytism. Please, these paths are not those of proselytism! Let us recall Benedict XVI: "the Church grows not through proselytism, but through attraction, through witness". The paths of mission are not those of proselytism, which leads always to a cul-de-sac, but of our way of being with Jesus and with others. The problem is not when we are few in number, but when we are insignificant, salt that has lost the flavour of the Gospel – this is the problem – or lamps that no longer shed light (cf. Mt 5:13-15).

I believe we should worry whenever we Christians are troubled by the thought we are only significant if we are the flour, if we occupy all the spaces. You know very well that our lives are meant to be "yeast", wherever and with whomever we find ourselves, even if this appears to bring no tangible or immediate benefits (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 210). For being a Christian is not about adhering to a doctrine, or a temple or an ethnic group. Being Christian is about an encounter, an encounter with Jesus Christ. We are Christians because we have been loved and encountered, and not as the result of proselytism. Being Christian is about knowing that we have been forgiven and knowing that we are asked to treat others in the same way that God treated us. For "by this everyone shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). [...] •

Pope Francis in Morocco

On the 30th and 31st of March, Pope Francis paid a visit to the very special Church area that is the Kingdom of Morocco, at the invitation of His Majesty Mohamed VI and the local bishops. The country has a population of 36 million, practically all of whom are Muslim, and is home to only 30,000 Catholics, all foreigners. It isn't possible to be Moroccan and Christian. So what was the Pope doing in such a context? ●●●

Once again, he had a surprise for us. Not only were the Christians out in force to mark the occasion, but also many Muslims were there too, despite the rain, to greet the Pope as he went by. The pastoral visit to Morocco, in another form, rounded off the Pope's previous visits to Egypt and Abu Dha-



bi. We now have numerous documents which, one after the other, make it clear that we should treat Muslims as our brothers. The conciliar document *"Nostra Aetate"* continues to be written today, as we speak.

By his visit, his humility and the very great approachability he showed towards people, the Holy Father was retracing the steps taken by Charles de Foucauld.

The aircraft landed at Rabat in driving rain. For the Moroccan people, this rain fell like a blessing from Heaven! They had been waiting for rain for a very long time. And it rained all day, not ceasing until that evening. We awaited the Pope and the King on the esplanade of the Mohamed V Mausoleum (national monument to the Father of the Nation) and watched the screens showing the crowds, ululating and chanting, all along the route of the papal motorcade. And in front of the massed ranks of the civil authorities of Morocco, civil society, countless young people, Moroccans and Christians, and the Christian authorities, His Majesty gave an extraordinarily warm welcoming address, in Arabic, French, Spanish and English. Inter alia, he said: *"The dialogue on tolerance will have been long-lived but has yet to achieve its ultimate purpose. The three Abrahamic religions do not exist merely to tolerate one another in an act of fatalistic resignation or lofty acceptance. They exist to be open to one another and to know each other... what all terrorism has in common is not religion but is precisely the very absence of religion. Because God is Love, we*

have endeavoured to make our Reign a testimony of our closeness to the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities."

With such words, are we so far removed from one another?

And the Pope answered him in equally simple tones: *"There is a constant need to progress beyond mere tolerance to respect and esteem for others... That is why freedom of conscience and religious freedom – which is not limited to freedom of worship alone, but allows all to live in accordance with their religious convictions – are inseparably linked to human dignity"*

An intense moment of high emotion in which we found all the key-ideas experienced by our Church in Morocco for very many years.

From there we followed the Pope and the King on their visit to the Mohamed VI University, where 1,300 imams are being trained. An unforgettable scene in which an imam sang the Muslim call to prayer in Arabic while a Jewish woman sang Adonai in Hebrew, and a Christian woman the Ave Maria. A feat for the choirmaster in blending these three prayers harmoniously, while the three singers sang hand in hand.

The evening ended with the Pope encountering sixty or so African migrants to whom he declared: *"You are not numbers, you are people"*. Their humanity throughout this very difficult journey was thus acknowledged!

The following day, Pope Francis went to visit a tiny dispensary kept by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in a slum neighbourhood, where

they support undernourished children, mothers, people with mental illnesses and those with severe burns. The Pope was in high heaven!

Then he arrived at the cathedral to meet the priests, those in consecrated life and the lay-people engaged in our Church; this too was a moment of great joy, especially when he greeted Fr Jean Pierre, the sole escapee from Tibhirinne; and Sister Ersilia, our doyenne who, at 97, continues to hold her place of service, with 60 years in Morocco and 80 in religious life. And then he gave us his message: *"Our mission as baptized persons, priests and consecrated men and women, is not really determined by the number or size of spaces that we occupy, but rather by our capacity to generate change and to awaken wonder and compassion. We do this by the way we live as disciples of Jesus, in the midst of those with whom we share our daily lives, joys and sorrows, suffering and hopes...the Church grows not through proselytism, but through attraction, through witness."* What joy to find gathered together for a few moments, all those consecrated brothers and sisters of the Diocese, listening to our Pastor.

And then the apotheosis: the Eucharist presided over by the Pope in the huge sports arena of Rabat, in the presence of 10,000 Chris-

tians; there was not an empty seat in the house. We were honoured with the presence of three ministers throughout the whole celebration. What a distance travelled since 1985, when we had to celebrate the Eucharist practically in secret, in one of our school-yards. A third of the Diocese was there, singing, praising the Lord and giving thanks for the marvels we had seen over these two days. And for the first time in the Kingdom, the Mass was rebroadcast, in its entirety, on national television.

Then the Pope departed on an aircraft from the Royal Air Maroc fleet.

And (something unheard of up to now), the next day's papers were not content to merely relate the event, but published pages and pages of photos, and reproduced in full the speeches made by the King and the Pope. The Church in Morocco - we are but a tiny seed, but O! What hope was sown on that day in this land!

+Vincent LANDEL s.c.j.
Archbishop Emeritus of Rabat



First Regional Meeting of formators

...for the Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region

The first regional meeting of formators in the Region of St. Miriam of Jesus Crucified was a long desire of many since many years. At last, it became a reality on 22nd and 23rd March 2019 at Chiang Mai in Thailand. Special thanks to our Superior General Fr. Gustavo Agín and to our Regional Superior Fr. Enrico Frigerio.

The formators were from Thailand (Frs. Luke Kriangsak, Mongkhon, Suthon, Phairote) from India (Frs. Stervin, Vipin) Regional Vicars of India (Fr. Arul) and Thailand (Fr. Chan Kunu) along with Very Rev. Fr. Gustavo (Superior General) and Fr. Enrico (Regional Superior)

The objectives of the meetings were;

- ▶ To reflect together about the formation in the Region under the light of the summary Document of the General meeting of formation of the Congregation Rome 2016.

- ▶ To update some important content to improve our service as formators.

- ▶ To assume the new challenges in vocational animation and the new challenge on the guidance of formation



houses.

- ▶ To constitute the Regional Vocational animation and formation teams.

1. Reflected together Sharing in Faith

The meeting begun by a fraternal sharing of experience in our respective formation houses. All the formators accepted that it is becoming more and more challenging and at the same time all of us acknowledged that how God works in our brothers, the way God leads us on with the support of the community of formators. God is at work and we are merely the instrument. This is the conviction.

All the formators underlined the importance of regular accompaniment which brings out the inner joy and the positive energy that circulate within the community and through the community of our friends, benefactors and well-wishers. It is this accompaniment which helps us to grow in inner freedom, responsibility and sense of belonging.

2. Need to be a living witness

We are, most of the time, attracted as well as surprised by the obedience, the simplicity, the ac-



countability and the orderliness of our elder fathers. This testimony in the communities makes us to grow and challenges us to be a living witness. In the recent years, we notice a drawback of not working together as formators. Hence, we are challenged to be united - work together and show an example to our younger ones.

3. Challenges

We all accepted that the new realities of Mobile, internet and Alcohol cultures are very much prevalent in our communities. As the document of formators advises us, there is no point in prohibiting them rather we, the formators, should educate the young to come to a correct use. As religious and formators, we too are provoked to see the way we use them in our personal life especially in the presence of the broth-

ers in our formation communities.

Conclusion

- We emphasised, once again on regular accompaniment i.e. to be with them (praying, working, playing, eating) in all their activities as much as possible.
- We underline doubly the need to be united as formators - discerning and working in team.
- Religious life is a creative fidelity to the Lord. Therefore, we are called to be creative and must provoke the brothers to be creative too in living their vowed life.
- We must translate and adopt the texts (Rule of Life and Ratio Formationis) according to our levels of formation.
- We need to be serious in seeking and in writing the report.

We need to ask to specify the area in which the brother is excelling in a mature way.

- Finally, we must not forget that we are called to form shepherds – pastors. Hence, we see the need to instil in them the formation of the Heart.

The meeting ended with an attitude of gratitude to all our fathers and brothers of Thailand.

Stervin Selvadass scj
General Councillor for formation

Presence & development of Betharram in India

1. Introduction

India is the land of diversities. It is the land of plurality, rich source of spirituality, knowledge and wisdom. At the same time it is also the land of vulnerabilities, caste, creed, language, ethnicity, religion, status etc,. Balancing between both the realities, we the fathers and brothers of the congregation of the Sacred Heart Jesus of Betharram started to spread our branches in this land of diversities. We have travelled long path, we have made our presence felt where ever we are and we were.



ramities for the future mission for the church and for the society under the leadership of Frs. Enrico, Jose Mirande, Xavier, Britto Rajan, Biju Paul, Suthon, Tidkham, Chan and Biju Antony, Shaju and Brothers Michael and Gerard. Our mission in formation both in Bangalore and in Mangalore are unique places for us. It is because all come from various cultures, places, regions to experience the spirituality and charism of our founder St. Michael Garicoits who said "Yes" to the will of God and inspired us to dedicate our lives to God and for the society as the consecrated persons.

2. Looking back at the path we have travelled. (24 Years)

Indian foundation of Betharram was concretely made with the opening of first formation house "SHOBHANA SHAAKHA" at Bangalore on 4th September 1995. The prime mission of Betharram at that stage was only forming the young Bethar-

The beautiful branch of Betharram has grown in its mission of forming Betharramities with our own two well established formation houses at Bangalore (Shobhana Shaakha) and Mangalore (Maria Kripa). Besides these we have regional novitiate for the formation of the students from the Saint Miriam Region at Bangalore. We are proud to have our own Betharram Sa-



cred Heart School at Simalaguri in Assam. By the grace of God and selfless services of our formators, Betharram in India is successful to have 30 priests of the church and 28 brothers are in various stages of their religious priestly formation.

3. The present scenario

Betharram in India is going through a process of growing and transition, mainly in the areas of animation, mission, and community life. Indian vicariate is the part of Saint Miriam Region which includes England and Thailand under the leadership of Fr. Austin for 22 years and now new regional superior is Fr. Enrico. The Sacred Heart Vicariate of India is the service of the church under the leadership of Fr. Biju Paul for 12 years now Fr. Arul, and the councillors. In the areas of mission, there is a growth from formation to pastoral, social, spiritual and educational. Besides two formation communities there are 8 parish centres

where we serve the people of God (Karnataka: Adigindanahalli, Yadavanhalli, Tiptur, Soose Palaya, Talmadigi; Tamil Nadu: Raya Puram Chennai; Assam: Simalaguri, Hojai). There is a children care home in the name of Fr. Xavier that is *Xavier Care Home* for the poor

children and we have 3 educational centres in Assam. *Betharram Sacred Heart Parish School*: it is the first parish and school of our own. It has got 6 substations and a small village school as well. School in Hojai and hostel for the children is also under our care. Now we have entered in to the Diocese of Diphu. We are in Lungting. There are two schools and a hostel under our care. In Bidar we do the collaborative mission and social work. We are also working for migrants who come to Bangalore Arch Diocese. In formation and pastoral mission we collaborate with Thailand, England, Vietnam, Holy Land and Argentina. We are growing together from formation communities to mission communities.

4. Looking with hope and seeing the growth

Betharram in India has extended its branch in various ministries such as, spiritual, pastoral, educational, social.

- *Spiritual ministry:* spreading the Gospel of Christ and Betharram spirituality is one of the main apostolate of our missionaries. We are engaged in many spiritual activities such as faith formation, recollection, renewal programmes.

- *Pastoral ministry:* as the pastors we are working in different parishes conducting animation programmes, faith renewal programmes, family visits, which really bear witness to our Betharramite way of life.

- *Educational ministry:* we are proud to have our own *Betharram Sacred Heart School* in Simalaguri in the archdiocese of Guwahti. At present we have 40 students. Apart from this we too have another 4 schools under our care. School in Tansila (Simalaguri), *Don Bosco High School* in Hojai, *St. Xavier's school* Hatikalli and *St. Mary's school* in Lungting.

- *Social ministry:* in Bangalore we have *Xavier Care Home*. There are 23 children at present who are

benefiting from our services. In Bidar also we do our social ministry.

In fact having travelled for 24 years, we have made remarkable impression as well as notable ministries and services in all the places wherever we are called to serve.

We remember with gratitude Fr. Gaspar the previous Superior General for his love and support. We thank Fr. Gustavo Agín, our new Superior General, and his councillors for their special love for the young vicariate. With gratitude we remember England and Thailand Vicariates for their solid support and collaboration and all the members of the Betharram family. Following the footsteps of our founder let us see the world in the eyes of Jesus, love with the heart of Jesus, and serve with the hands of Jesus, and be humble instruments of God for the salvation of souls.

Arul Gnana Prakash scj
Regional Vicar in India



Father Jean COURET scj

Pontacq, 26 June 1936 - Bétharram, 2 February 2019 (France)

Father Jean Couret, whom we called « Jeannot », passed away on Saturday February 2nd, in the retirement home of Betharram. He was born in Pontacq (15 km away from Betharram), on June 25th 1936.

After studying in the Saint Joseph school of his village, he entered the apostolicate in Betharram, then the seminary of Bel-Sito, in Floirac (Gironde). After his ordination in Bordeaux in 1965, he was named in the community of Cenon (a suburb of Bordeaux), amidst a working-class parish. There he lived a first self-abasement : becoming a religious-priest in a Church more accessible to the world, dialoguing with this world inhabited by God's Spirit, according to the intuition of the Concile, which will be concluded on that very year.

For him, a new turning point and self-abasement : he chose to be a worker-priest, a docker in the harbour of Bordeaux, fully inserted in the working-world, while belonging to the pastoral team of Saint-Martial and Saint-Rémi.

A new abasement in the Forman-oir housing-estate of Pessac, near Betharramite brothers, and immigrants, and discovering a popular religiosity, for instance with people from Mauritius. He lived an intense commitment there, defending the immigrants' dignity.



Then, a new abasement when he retired at the age of 62, volunteering to strengthen the Betharramite presence in Ivory Coast which was still very frail in 1998 (he will spend six years there, in Adiapodoumé, then in Dabakala).

Back in Béarn, a semi-retirement in Idron enabled him to be rooted in Béarn again. But this was only a short peace, as a stroke caused him serious damage : an abasement in illness and dependence during 6 years and a half in this Betharram nursing-home. No doubt the impossibility of communicating was for him the biggest trial to bear.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

(Lc 4, 18-19)

This passage from Saint Luke gives a good idea of the life-orientation of our brother, and of the convictions which animated him in Bordeaux, in his ministry in Ivory Coast, and in Béarn, with this will to make himself close and bring the good news to the people of the periphery who sometimes feel themselves far from the Church. He was that man of the encounter with the immigrants who made him discover – so he said – that difference becomes wealth, and that every race, every culture, is worked up by the same Spirit of God ; there, he lived some commitment with the anti-expulsion nets and the feasts of the ASTI (an association of solidarity with immigrant workers).

He was a messenger of the good news through the radio, by animating weekly broadcast, then information bulletins such as « Tam-Tam and balafon » and « The Garbure » (a dish from Béarn). In all this, he was a religious-priest of the Sacred Heart of Betharram. During the 25th jubilee of his ordination, he told us that his fondness for Betharram was like a family heritage. When he was a puny baby, his mother had laid him on Father's Garicoït's grave. He perceived this as an offering gesture, as when he was 11 he entered the apostolic school on the year of the Founder's canonization.

Like us, he had his defects ; his convictions sometimes did not give room to those of others. But for us, who were familiar with him, he was a joyfull brother, admiring and marveling in front of the world, benevolent, without being at all severe with the people round him.

After the Eucharist, we are going to place him in our cemetery, in front

« La Garbure des Pyrénées », nr 15, Summer 2008,

Extracts signed by Fr. Jean Couret scj:

“ *In the sixties, Algeria was on the front page of newspapers and in the French talks¹: many young men went there to ‘assure order’ and defend the French interests.*

There I am, called to Castres (July 1958) to make my military service. To leave the seminary and find ourselves in the military atmosphere did upset us at first. But we were young and able to adapt to our new life. In fact, we were nearly twelve seminarists round Father Maffre, our chaplain.

After our military training and the P1 (test for affectation), we left for the region of Oran to ‘earn our braids’ as our captain said. Starting from Marseilles, we sailed, a bit shaken, to arrive in Oran. We were bewildered by the dry landscape and the obviously poor people. Soon, it was solitude on a desolate peak 10 km away from the small village of Mendez. Our life was rythmed by daily and nightly watches and combings. Our dog Suto opened the way... which secured us. Dust, sometimes mud, but also fine dysenteries interrupted our boredom! Sometimes we slept in old mechtas filled with lice and flees... but the inhabitants’ welcome was fraternal, even if coffee was flavoured with the traditional mint and pepper. (...)

This interlude marked by solitude and the discovery of hard realities made me appreciate people better, and moreover a warm-hearted Algerian people !... For us, seminarists, there was before and after. It enabled us to live internationality better and to become “worker-priest” later on.

1) The war in Algeria or war of independance from France, took place from 1954 to 1962.

of the Resurrection chapel where his mother had placed him on the Founder's grave. Today the offering, the offering of his life, is accomplished. Today is accomplished for you this encounter with this God of Love, full

of tenderness, whom you witnessed in your life of religious-priest. "O Mary, here he is, welcome him and present him to your Beloved Son".

Laurent Bacho scj

Father Luigi Speziale scj

Campo Tartano, 11 December 1939 - Solbiate, 15 March 2019 (Italy)

Fr. Luigi was born in Campo Tartano in Sondrio Province (Northern Italy), on 11 December 1939.

After entering the minor seminary of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram in Albavilla (1951-1957), he was sent for the novitiate year to Monteporzio Catone (Rome) where he made his first vows (1956-1957). Finally, he studied philosophy and theology at the major seminary of the Congregation in Albiate (MB) (1957-1965).

He was ordained a priest on 12 June 1965 by Card. Giovanni Colombo, Archbishop of Milan.

From 1965 to 2015 Fr. Luigi lived in the Betharramite communities in the Holy Land, carrying out his ministry as Music and Latin teacher at the Latin Patriarchal Seminary of Beit-Jala.

Subsequently, after having obtained a degree in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University (1970-1972), he returned to the community of Bethlehem and carried out his ministry as professor of Canon Law, still in the Patriarchal Seminary of Beit-jala.



He remained in the Holy Land communities for fifty years.

In this long period Fr. Luigi held various ministries: for over forty years he was a master of patriarchal ceremonial, confessor of the community of Sisters, chaplain of the Carmel of Bethlehem.

He was for some years Superior of the Betharramite community of Nazareth and Superior of the Delegation of the Holy Land.

Fr. Luigi was in love with the Holy Land, the land of Jesus, and was a great connoisseur of this land. He

wrote several books about the land he loved so much, the last of which: «The Holy Land of Mary of Nazareth. Here... where everything speaks of her» (Caritas Gerusalemme Editions, in Italian only) was published in 2016 when Fr. Luigi, though bodily frail, lived in the care home run by the Hospital Order of Saint John of God in Solbiate Comasco (Como).

In recent years Fr. Luigi was lovingly supported by Fr. Alessandro Paniga scj, chaplain at the Care home of Solbiate, who witnessed to the closeness and presence of our Congregation. Let us entrust Fr. Luigi to the Lord. May he be welcomed in that dwelling that God gives to his faithful servants. May

he listen to the voice of Jesus who says: "Well done good and faithful servant,...come and share in the joy of your master" (Mt. 25:23).

Fr. Luigi Speziale will rest in the cemetery of Campo Tartano, his hometown.

«*Fr. Luigi leaves us an excellent memory but also a rich human, Christian and religious heritage, worthy of being transmitted with gratitude and seriousness. If we speak so highly of him, it is because, for us, Fr. Luigi was a real blessing for the Congregation as well as for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. And we pray the Lord to inspire in young people many vocations of his calibre, in the service of Betharram and the Holy Land.* »

Excerpt from the Letter of Condolence by Mgr Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

In the house of the Father

On the evening of March 20th **Mrs Roseline Daly**, 44 years old, sister of Fr Armel Daly scj of the Bouar "O. L. of Fatima" community, died. Let us pray for our brother and his family.

On Sunday, March 24, **Mr. Cesare Marelli**, brother-in-law of Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior of the St. Myriam of Jesus Crucified Region, died. We express our sympathy to Fr Enrico and his family and we offer our prayers for the repose of the soul of their dear one.

On Saturday, March 30, **M. Fernando Abel Dos Santos**, brother of Fr. Francisco de Assis Dos Santos scj, of the community of Serrinha (Vicariate of Brazil), passed away, in Conceição do Rio Verde. We offer Fr Chiquinho and his family members our heartfelt condolences reassuring them that we hold them and their dear one in our thoughts and our prayers.

On April 15, at the age of 59 years, **Mr. Felix Aloysius**, brother in law of our confrere Fr Michael Anthony Britto Rajan scj (community of Bangalore, Vicariate of India) died in Chennai (India). As members of the Betharram family we are close to Fr Britto and his family and we pray for the eternal rest of their dear one.



REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS

 FRANCE ^{SPAIN}
 ITALY ^{CENTRAL AFRICA} ^{IVORY COAST}
 HOLY LAND

France-Spain

The novices accompanied by their Master were at the Mother house at Betharram. Greetings to the resident fathers of our retirement home after a quick visit to our community of Pau, the old Carmel. Our prayers accompany them through the intercession of Our Lady of Betharram and our Founder St Michael Garicoits. •



Monthly meeting of the "Fraternité Me Voici" on Tuesday March 12 at Betharram. Sharing on the humble figure of St. Joseph, celebrated the week after, Tuesday 19. A great silent figure of the Gospel, he welcomes Mary home, he raises the child Jesus, he introduces him to his work. Jesus presented as



the carpenter's son invites us to love a job well done. And also the opportunity to take a fresh look at the qualities, values and virtues of the Holy Family of Nazareth. •

Ivory Coast

On Saturday, March 16, the community of Adiapodoumé had the great joy of welcoming all the religious of the diocese of Yopougon, on the occasion of a day of recollection on the theme: "Lent, a path of liberation with all creation". After the opening address given by Fr. François Pacula, Episcopal Vicar, in charge of religious life, Father Jean-Paul Kissi scj, leader of the day, urged the assembly, in his preaching, to lead the fight to holiness and perfection; a fight which, for him, will last a lifetime. Hence the need to make a continual re-reading of our life to shake up and correct our infirmities, thus accepting to go ahead with a heart always purified. The important thing, emphasized the father, is to be aware of our relationship to created things in order to avoid the weight of our sins to break the harmony with creation. He therefore invited us to live with the Lord a journey of repentance and forgiveness, respecting "the healthy gap" in our relationships with others. Then Fr Kissy, at the end of his sharing, returned, like the Holy Father, on the importance of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, which will help us to live this Lenten



season in a more fruitful way. After a short fraternal exchange, the religious had a few moments of adoration before allowing time for confession. All of this was offered to the Lord in the Eucharistic celebration. This recollection ended with a fraternal meal. •

For the Katiola-Dabakala area, the recollection of the Lenten season was preached by Fr Constant Katéscj on the theme: "Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face, a model of universal holiness and a testimony of life for us religious today" and an invitation to remember the origins of our vocation. •



REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

Argentina-Uruguay

On Saturday 23 March afternoon in Beltrán (in the outskirts of Santiago del Estero), Mgr. Vicente Bokalic, Bishop of the Diocese of Santiago del Estero, ordained Br. Leandro Narduzzo SCJ to the Diaconate.

In this inland Diocese of Argentina, the Betharramites have ensured

a missionary presence for many years. We have been in different places (Santiago del Estero, Nueva Esperanza, Villa la Punta) and a few months ago, we started a new missionary presence in Beltrán, where Br. Leandro was appointed and helps now, by his youthful enthusiasm, the missionary activity along with Fr. Giancarlo Monzani SCJ and Fr. Subesh Odiyathingal SCJ.

The ordination was celebrated in the highschool of Beltrán, where our Betharramite religious reside, and was attended by Fr. Daniel González SCJ, Regional Superior, and by Fr. Sergio Gouarnalusse SCJ, Regional Vicar in Argentina-Uruguay, by several Betharramite brothers, by members of the diocesan clergy, and by the parents and friends who came specially from Buenos Aires. •





At the Council meeting of April 3, 2019, the Superior General approved, with the advice of his Council,

- the opening of a new residence in Langting (Diocese of Diphu, in Assam); in response to the request of the Regional Superior, Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj, and under Article 275 of the Rule of Life, he decided **to close the community of Hojai in order to erect the community of Hojai-Langting**, composed of these two residences (Vicariate of India, SMJC Region);
- the **acceptance of a new mission in Fang** (parish of the Epiphany with its missionary centre and neighbouring villages); in response to the request of the Regional Superior, Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj, and under Article 275 of the Rule of Life, he decided **to close the community of Huay Bong - Muangnam in order to erect the community of Huay Bong - Muangnam - Fang**, composed of these three residences (Diocese of Chiang Mai, Vicariate of Thailand, SMJC Region);
- the appointment of the following **Community Superiors**, for a 1st mandate from 3 April 2019:

(Vicariate of England, SMJC Region)

- ▶ Fr. Wilfred Poulse Pereppadan – Superior of the community of Clifton-Nottingham;

(Vicariate of India, SMJC Region)

- ▶ Fr. Jesuraj Mariadas – Superior of the new community of Hojai-Langting;
- ▶ Fr. Antony Siluvai – Superior of the community of Bangalore;
- ▶ Fr. Charles Enakius – Superior of the community of Adigundanahally-Yadavanahally;

(Vicariate of Thailand, SMJC Region)

- ▶ Fr. John Chokdee Damronganurak – Superior of the new community of Huay Bong - Muangnam - Fang;
- ▶ Fr. David Bi-thu Pitak – Superior of the community of Maepon;
- ▶ Fr. Bernard Suthon Khiriwathanasakun – Superior of the community of Ban Pong-Phayao;
- ▶ Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong – Superior of the community of Sampran;

(Vicariate of Brazil, FrAE Region)

for a 2nd mandate from December 16th 2018:

- ▶ Fr. Glecimar Guilherme da Silva – Superior of the community of Belo Horizonte;
- the appointment of the following formators of the SMJC Region, from 26 May 2019:
 - ▶ Fr. Vipin Joseph Chirammel – master of the scholastics in Mangalore;
 - ▶ Fr. Stervin Fernando Selvadass – master of the novices in Bangalore;
- The Superior General also decided to re-admit Nicolas Surasak Doohae (Vicariate of Thailand) in the Congregation, under article 313 of the Rule of Life.

Father Etchecopar finds a treasure in Betharram

by Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

The project of the Holy Cross Society of Oloron* (also called the House of Superior Studies) fizzled out. The Superior, Mgr. Menjoulet, and other members of the so called Society left to occupy other posts in the diocese of Bayonne or elsewhere, so their number remained reduced. Mgr. Lacroix tried to merge the Holy Cross Society with the community of Bétharram with the idea of changing the spirit of the latter, which he wanted without perpetual vows and in the exclusive service of the diocese. "Father Garicoits, though always ready to obey, would have always declared that such a combination would only result in ruins."¹ Consequently, St Michael did not accept the assimilation of the group of the Holy Cross as a whole, but studied each individual case. Of the 11 members of the Holy Cross Society, 8 were accepted at Bétharram, including Auguste Etchécopar. By then it was the summer of 1855.

The 8 priests who came from Holy Cross found 26 priests, 23 brothers and around 15 scholars in Bétharram, as well as a climate of spirituality, fraternity and apostleship. But above all they met Father Garicoits and for Father Etchécopar, it was like finding a treasure. When Father Etchécopar met St. Michael, he experienced a



spiritual consolation, which he never forgot, and which made him say: "The virtue of Father Garicoits was so delightful; he exercised, by the halo of his sanctity, an ascendancy which made even the most painful sacrifices pleasant. Everything at Bétharram, men and things, then reflected the virtues of its founder. This house was a sanctuary where the soul immediately felt full of contemplation, meditative prayer and fervour. It was a community whose members had as their own stamp of exquisite simplicity, austere poverty, expansive charity, and unquestioning obedience."²

Etchécopar was aware that a new life had just begun for him; he discovered the ideal of the consecrated life hitherto unknown to him; he committed unconditionally to the spiritual path of the man who was, in his eyes, a perfect teacher of doctrine and a perfect model of perfection.³

St. Michael recognized the validity of the novitiate made by Fr. Etchécopar at Holy Cross. He was happy to welcome him because he reminded him of the sanctity of his uncle Evariste Etchécopar whom he had known while studying at Saint-Palais. The first destination of Father Etchécopar was the community of the Col-

2) *L'Homme au visage de lumière*, Pierre Duvignau s.c.j., p. 40

3) Cf. *L'Homme au visage de lumière*, Pierre Duvignau s.c.j., p. 41

1) *Le Très Révérend Père Auguste Etchécopar*, Pierre Fernessole, p. 76

lege of Oloron that the Bishop had just entrusted to Bétharram. He was to be there with Father Minvielle, also of Holy Cross, and with Father Rossigneux, who had a university education. (see DS § 302)

A year and a half later, having lost several reliable colleagues who had been sent as a team to Argentina in 1856, Fr. Garicoïts named Fr. Etchécopar master of novices, at just 27 years old. Every morning for eight years, before the novice conference, Father Auguste would have an interview with Father Garicoïts, followed by a time before the tabernacle to internalize the Founder's guidance. In this way he came to the source of the charism that Saint Michael Garicoïts had received by divine inspiration. He took notes from weekly lectures or daily retreat conferences, trying to faithfully collect the experience, memories, thoughts, and even the feelings and emotions of the Founder and the divine character of his vocation. In order to gather his thoughts faithfully, Fr. Etchécopar would sometimes have to hide - Fr. Garicoïts being uncompromising on this point - or ask a novice to take notes.

Saint Michael was convinced that Father Etchécopar had an intense spiritual life. This is why, in addition to the novitiate, he entrusted him with the preaching of ordination retreats, retreats for teachers, or the Daughters of the Cross, and retreats for those who came to consult St Mi-

chael in Bétharram, as well as certain canonical visits, notably in Oloron and Orthez.⁴

Here are some indications of Fr Etchécopar's admiration for Saint Michael Garicoïts: He calls him Father because he considered him as the one who gave us the gift of being born to religious life (Letter 2 / January / 1893). I saw Saint Michael as a true Master in following and imitating the Sacred Heart (Letters 4 / March / 1894; 28 / October / 1889; 18 / June / 1886). He regarded St Michael as a charismatic man, a man of God, because he lived a strong experience of the Spirit (Circular 1888). He introduces us to Saint Michael as a man of discernment (L, 19/2/1885). Those who study his writings, says Fr. Etchécopar, "are amazed to see him [...] working for 40 years, 1°, with so much depth of sight; 2°, so much strength in the choice of materials; 3°, so much method, clarity and precision that they write: "Happy the Congregation which possesses such a Master, an initiator so complete, so perfect in all his ecclesiastical knowledge for the formation of its members."⁵

Father Etchécopar collected all the testimonies he could from people who knew Saint Michael in order to be able to transmit to future generations as faithful as possible a portrait of our Father.

Father Etchécopar was the only

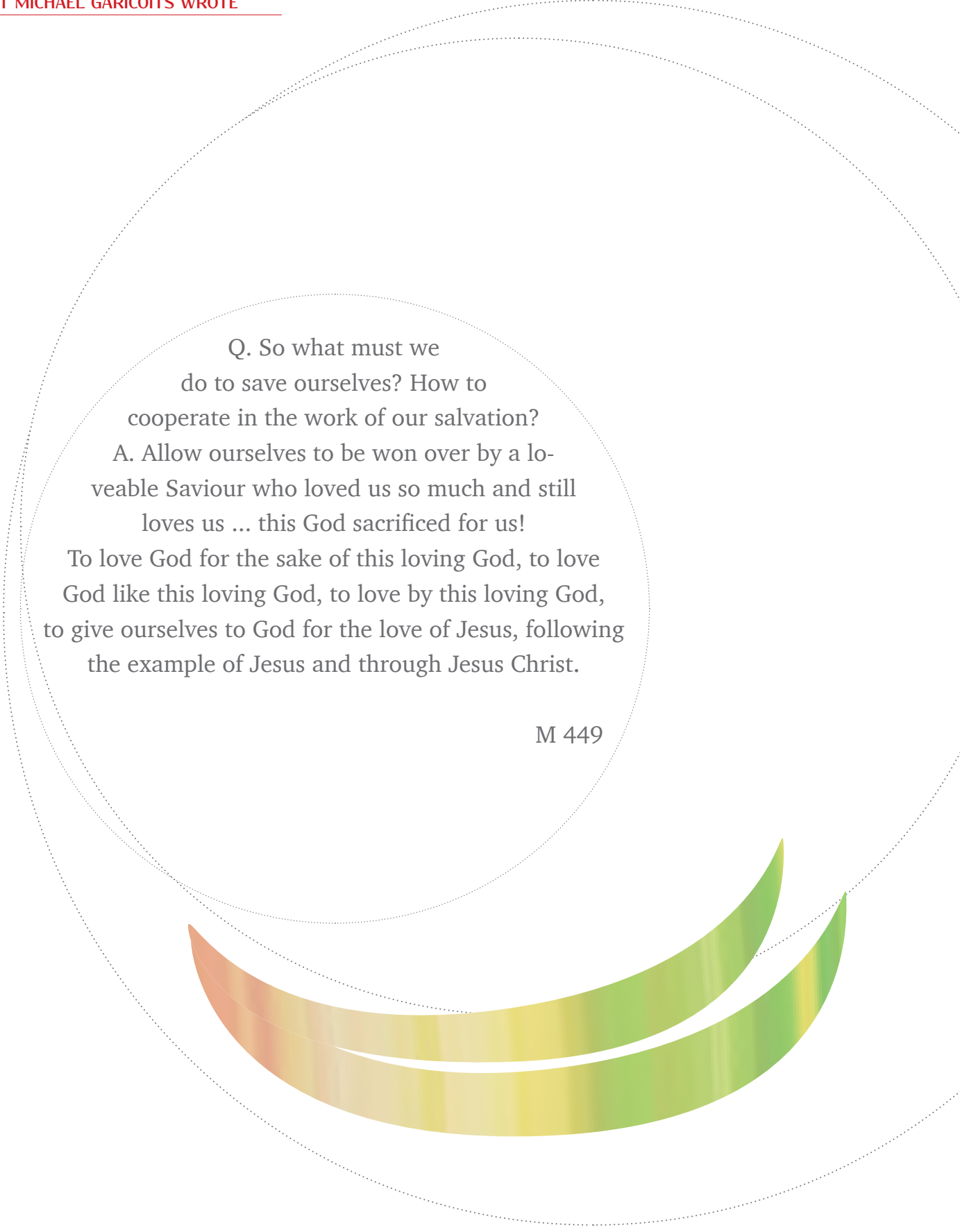
4) *Correspondance, Tome II, Lettre 215*

5) *Lettre 1605, 2 novembre 1893*

one who could leave us these two portraits of his spiritual father and Master, Saint Michael Garcoïts:

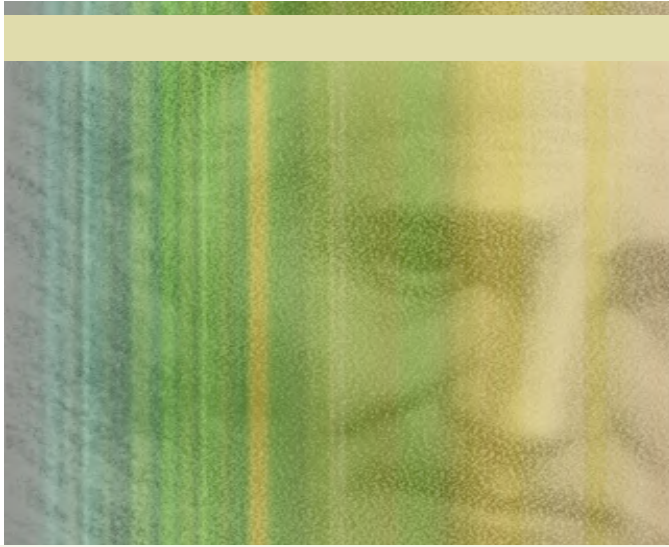
- *"From that moment, [the moment when, on his return from Toulouse, having finished the Spiritual Exercises, he prostrated himself before the Virgin of Bétharram to offer his election and received a great consolation by way of confirmation] we see him as austere as an hermit, simple as a child, tender as a mother, humble as a useless servant, with indefatigable activity, with invincible force and gentleness, and at the same time an organizer, professor, chaplain, director of souls, wise in his counsel, intrepid in action, supporting his word by example; we witnessed him, without pause or rest until his last breath, founding, elevating, strengthening the sacred work which has become our inheritance."* (Circular letter 1/3/1885)
- In his letter sent on 4 June 1863, Fr. Etchécopar writes from Bétharram to Fr. Henri Ramière, SJ, Director of the "Messenger of the Sacred Heart": "Our superior was a truly mortified man; he ate little, slept only five hours, worked almost tirelessly, had no leisure activity as such and showed himself to be of unalterable goodness, charity, and grace, though this was interrupted as he was torn in various directions by a multitude of occupations and continual details. Business made him forget about food and sleep. Up at three

o'clock in the morning, studying at four o'clock, he taught a philosophy class at six-thirty, theology at eleven o'clock, and sometimes remained in the confessional until four o'clock in the afternoon, without having taken any food all day, then he returned to his books, gave a lecture to the priests, and devoted the rest of the day to study and to other duties as superior of a community. He seemed indefatigable, indifferent to everything; this total and constant self-denial, he did it all in the respect and love which he had devoted to the will of the Lord. *Fiat voluntas tua!* This was the continual cry of his heart. Respect for this divine will is what he has always preached and sought to inculcate; renouncing and considering our own will with contempt, that is what he battled with constantly and to extremes; to search with virginal innocence, and to accomplish like a soldier, as he said with energy, is the goal to which we must always strive. In a nutshell, that is the story of his life. The will of God has asked three things of Michael Garcoïts in particular: 1. that he should endeavour to found the work of the auxiliary diocesan priests of Bétharram; 2. that he help in the establishment of the Daughters of the Cross in our country; 3. that he should direct souls in their choice of a state of life." •



Q. So what must we
do to save ourselves? How to
cooperate in the work of our salvation?
A. Allow ourselves to be won over by a lo-
veable Saviour who loved us so much and still
loves us ... this God sacrificed for us!
To love God for the sake of this loving God, to love
God like this loving God, to love by this loving God,
to give ourselves to God for the love of Jesus, following
the example of Jesus and through Jesus Christ.

M 449



*Fathers & Brothers of the
community of
Belo Horizonte
(Brazil)*



TOGETHER, share the same faith: Christ, died and risen, illuminates everyone's heart.

Together, radiate the same joy.

Together, in community, let us be a sign and announce the Risen One.

Happy Easter to all!



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