

er was placed in the introduction but there was no mention of the fact that “human beings are cold before God” and that priests were unable to say yes. It is to be noted also the quotes from the Bible plus those from the Council and the writings of the Founder that weren’t to be found in the 1947 Constitutions. The first five chapters introduce the spirituality; this was something new since the *Ecce Venio* had been lost sight of in the 1901 Constitutions. Next came the chapters on formation (6); apostolic works (7); government (8); the temporal administration (9); and leaving the Congregation (10). The first chapter *Nature and Spirit of the Congregation* explains very clearly the identity of the Congregation and which we would call the Charism today. This latter is composed of three important dimensions: spirituality, community and mission. The Charism is defined as a gift from the Holy Spirit given to St Michael Garicoits which consists of “reproducing and manifesting the impulse of the Incarnate Word saying to his Father: *Ecce Venio*, and surrendering himself to all his wishes for the redemption of mankind” (Rule of Life 1969, art 2). The important figures in the presentation of the charism as it appears in the Rule were Father Joseph Mirande for the style of the text, Father Mateo and Fr Duvignau even though the latter wasn’t member of the Chapter.

The second chapter *Our Apostolic Life* introduced what we would call today the mission of the Congregation, by clearly distinguishing it from the contents of Chapter 7, namely the apostolic works. In 1981 the XXI General Chapter completed the revision of the Rule of Life before submitting it to a vote. Father Pierre Grech who had been elected Superior General in 1975, was re-elected in 1981 for a second mandate. It was he who would submit the Rule to the Sacred Congregation for final approval. On 25 March 1983, on the feast of the “*Ecce Venio*” and the “*Ecce Ancilla*,” Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, signed the decree approving our Rule of Life. In July 1985 a conference was held at Betharram on the Charism of St Michael. This was to mark the beginning of a deepening of the charismatic identity at the heart of the Congregation; as point of reference there was the Manifesto of the Founder, preface to the 1838 Constitutions, the text of which was to be found in Father Cassou’s notes. In 1989, in reply to a letter from the CIVCSVA, the Rule of Life was adapted to the new Code of Canon Law, promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1983.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj



Societas S<sup>m</sup>i Cordis Jesu  
BETHARRAM

87  
2013

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NE

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE  
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA  
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA  
FAMILY NEWS

News bulletin of the Congregation  
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

111<sup>th</sup> year  
10<sup>th</sup> series, nr 87  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2013

## A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

### The community superior

The new Rule of Life underlines an important service in the Congregation, namely that of community superiors. Prior to the Council every religious wanted to be superior because it represented a certain kind of power in big communities; today it is difficult to find a brother willing to accept this service in the small communities where it is easier to have a discussion beyond what is necessary. And yet it is even more necessary, even fundamental that a brother accepts this service of animation, coordination and communion respectful of each brother.

Article 105 thus defines this role: *The Superior holds an important role in this communion of persons, which should be built up unceasingly. He is the first leader and animator of the life in the community: superiors will employ themselves in the first place with the greatest zeal by uniting all hearts.* Articles 278, 279 and 280 state precisely what are the specific functions of the community superior.

His authority is above all else moral. It is from the witness of his life that he will be recognised: fidelity to his vocation, the practice of Christian virtues, obedience to the Rule of Life and to the traditions of the Congregation.

A brother with his brothers, he accompanies them,

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Sebastián García, scj

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## 10 – The Rule in the light of the Council

On 11 October 1962 Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Council Vatican II in St Peter's Basilica.

For our Congregation this was the beginning of a period of renewal requested by the very same Council and extending to the present day. Here are some of the outstanding events: as a preparation for the Council Fr Joseph Mirande, Superior General, was summoned to Rome to be part of the Commission of Religious preparing the Council: (See NEF 94, 20/11/1960, pg 161-162). In 1963 the Congregation celebrated the centenary of the death of our Father, St Michael Garicoits with all due solemnity. It was of great importance not only at Betharram but in the whole Congregation.

In 1964 the XVIII ordinary General Chapter took place. Amongst the documents was the letter from Fr Mirande to all the religious inviting each one for his contribution to the renewal of the Congregation. The motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae requested the summoning of an extraordinary Chapter for the revision of the Constitutions in the light of the Council. At Bel Sito an Interprovincial Commission with representatives of all the Provinces of the Congregation met to study the answers to the Questionnaire and to prepare the General Chapter dedicated to the Renewal of the Congregation: (see the Commission Document Nef 187-188).

This extraordinary General Chapter took place in 1969 and it was during it that the

new Rule of Life was drawn up with all the notes from the Commission. This Rule of Life was approved ad experimentum for 10 years. During this same Chapter Fr Giovanni Trameri was elected Superior General. The 1969 Rule of life was noteworthy on several points: The Manifesto of the Found-



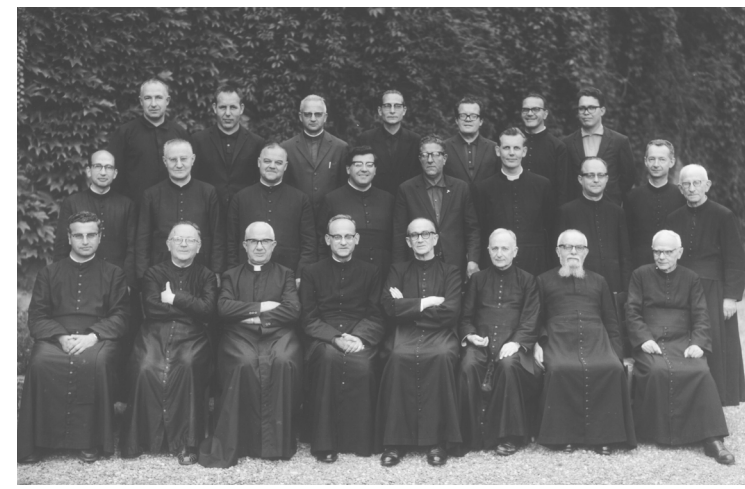
*Brother among brothers, the community Superior (here Fr Sylvain Dansou at Adiapodoumé) must be ready to meet all the challenges of the fraternal life...*

loves them and listens to them. He will bring out their finest qualities as human beings. He takes care of the sick members of the community and visits them. Bearing in mind the talents of each one he encourages the brothers to put them at the service of all. He is interested in the spiritual life of the community. He will develop the collaboration of each one in the life of the community and encourages obedience through dialogue as well as in the demands of our vocation. He checks rebellion in the same way as he confirms weakness, and he is patient with everyone. (C.I.C. 619)

He is a builder of communion and unity in the respect of differences by favouring the spirituality of fraternal communion in Christ founded on personal and community prayer, and on mature and respectful relations such as we see in the Gospels (Rule of Life 96). He encourages good com-

munication as each one takes part in community affairs. He gives encouragement to the brothers helping them to be faithful to their commitments to the end. He favours dialogue and possibility of meetings. When things are difficult he looks for pardon and reconciliation. With the help of all concerned he draws up and reviews the community project. (Rule of Life 278b).

He knows how to instil courage and hope when times are difficult. He also knows how to be creative by opening up new horizons for the mission. It is his wish to keep the balance between prayer and work, the apostolate and formation, apostolic works and rest. He sees to it that all the members of the community are faithful to the vow of poverty by depending on the community, by pooling whatever they own, by rendering exact personal accounts, an uncomplicated life style and the collective witness to poverty.



*Members of the 1969 General Chapter*

NOVEMBER

15	Feliz cumpleaños	Hno Alberto Zaracho
16	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Narcisse Zaolo
17	Feliz cumpleaños 60 years of profession	Ho. Alfredo Alfonso Fr. Terence O'Malley
18	Buon compleanno	F. Claudio Mantegazza
22	Happy birthday	Br. Liam Finucane
23	Happy birthday	Fr. Arul Gnana Prakash Joseph
24	Buon compleanno	P. Giacomo Spini
26	Feliz cumpleaños Happy birthday	P. Giancarlo Monzani Fr. Chaiyot Charoenkun
28	Happy birthday Buon compleanno 65 años de sacerdocio	Fr. Dominic Innamorati P. Ercole Ceriani P. Julián Miguel
29	Happy birthday	Fr. Kriangsak Kitsakunwong Br. Jesurai Mariadas
30	Buon compleanno	P. Andrea Antonini

DECEMBER

1	Buon compleanno Feliz cumpleaños	P. Francesco Radaelli P. Dario Silvero
2	Joyeux anniversaire	F. Emile Garat
3	Happy birthday Bom aniversário	Fr. Stervin Selvadass Fernando Fr. Biju Anthony Panthalukkaran Pe. Luiz Henrique Ribeiro
6	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Beñat Oyhénart
8	50 años de sacerdocio	P. Constancio Erobaldi
11	Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. Luigi Speziale Fr. Pascal Ravi

It is also he who encourages and accompanies each member in discovering God's will for him. He can be aware of what his brothers are going through, life in society and in the Church. In this way it is a help for the community in discerning the signs of the times. He encourages his brothers in commitments which can strengthen their vocation and their mission. Finally he can take the necessary decisions and stick to them.

He makes a point of verifying that the mission of the community is in harmony with the charism, the orientations of the Congregation and the pastoral of the local and universal Church (Rule of Life 19).

He encourages the on-going formation of each religious. This is something which requires a community atmosphere which is responsible, evangelical, fraternal, prayerful, open and missionary. This is how each religious can work at his own on-going formation and how the important orientations

can become a reality thanks to the patience and faithful mediation of each day. The religious community is a place of growth for each religious where each one feels responsible for the development of his fellow religious. Day by day the community becomes a place where as religious we are helped to respond to the calls of the poor and the challenges of the world of today. The passage from "me" to "us", from the personal commitment to the collective one, from personal projects to missionary projects, can be verified.

The Rule of Life reminds us that the religious appointed superior have as their first mission one of service to their brothers according to the Rule and the orientations of the Congregation and the Church. It is a mandate of three years, renewable once. It is good to avoid having the same person hold this mandate too long in the same community.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, sci



*Saint Michael Garicoits wrote...*

Humility is like a grain of mustard seed. To the proud it is a very small virtue, despised and repelled by the worldly wise, but chosen by divine Wisdom who has established it as the foundation stone of the whole edifice of Christian and religious life. If you want to be great, humble yourselves, hide yourselves, be meek. Where do the tall trees come from? From a tiny little seed, hidden and rotting in the earth. It is the only path leading to real glory. What are the Signs of real humility? Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart. (Matthew 11,29). Our beloved Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the real master and teacher of all knowledge, of every virtue and the model of all perfection. (M 410)

## Making the experience of St Michael Garicoits known

VERY OFTEN THOSE WHO HEAR MENTION OF BETHARRAM FOR THE FIRST TIME ASK US: "WOULD YOU HAVE SOME READING MATTER TO PROPOSE TO GET TO KNOW ST MICHAEL AND YOUR CONGREGATION BETTER?" WELL THE BOOKLET WHICH HAS JUST COME OUT "FROM THE HEART OF CHRIST TO THE HEART OF THE WORLD" OUGHT TO RESPOND TO THIS NEED AND AROUSE INTEREST IN THOSE, WHETHER RELIGIOUS OR LAITY, ARE KEEPING ALIVE THE GIFT WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

"Can this be the end of the Adventure? God, the Eternal, has no ending and today the dough continues to rise, the seed to germinate. Can you not see it? The Spirit is still at work!" It is with these words, full of hope that this little publication ends. The idea was the General Council's two years ago in view of the celebration of the 150 years since the death of St Michael Garicoits. In this booklet of 40 pages, called "From the Heart of Christ to the heart of the world" the author, Fr Benat Oyhenart SCJ, relates brilliantly and with spirit, St Michael's adventure in four chapters: the

most important stages of his life; those who as faithful instruments of the Holy Spirit helped him to discern his vocation, as a priest first of all, then as a religious and founder; the places where he carried out his ministry; the difficulties which he met in the work of foundation. There then follows a peep at the presence of the Congregation today in the world, which helps us to see that the "dough is still rising" and that the Spirit is still at work. The booklet has numerous colour photographs making it much more interesting to read and appreciate the recent works



The book in English is available for those who wish to buy it:  
**In England:** The Friary, St. Bernard's Road, OLTON SOLIHULL B92 7BL, West Midlands, £ +44 (121) 706 05 05; **In India:** Shobhana Shaakha, Study House, Bosco Nagar, K. R. Puram P.O., BANGALORE 560036, £ +91 (80) 2 561 41 34/2 561 26 12; **In Thailand:** Ban Betharram, 195/1 Chang Klan Road, CHIANG MAI 50100, £ +66 (0) 53 27 54 25

# OF THE CONGREGATION

nerosity of the whole Region (we express once again our gratitude to the communities who responded to our appeal).

## Vicariate of Argentina

### A larger Family ▶

From November 1 to 3, the Betharramite Lay Association held the annual meeting in Villa Betharram, Adrogué. Lay people from almost all communities, along with Frs Gustavo Agin (Regional Superior), Paco and Giancarlo attended the meeting. They reflected on the Betharramite spirituality from a lay perspective. Time for personal refection was followed by group sharing.

It was a meaningful experience of fraternity among families. Children played a key role in the meeting... they experienced what means to be a family... they could see their parents share, pray, serve... and



in turn they could co-operate, pray, sing... They knew each other more and more and they learnt how to share as brothers... every year they grow in age and in number... Betharram is a family!

## Vicariate of England

**Ecumenical event ▶** On September 29, Churches together in Balsall Heath (Birmingham) signed a covenant to work together to bear a Christian witness in this area in planned events throughout the year.

This event although it takes place in England is unique because these are very diverse Churches who will work together. White Churches and Black Churches. They are Catholic, Church of England (Anglican), Baptist, Wesleyan Holiness, God of Prophecy and United Reform Churches (Calvinist). This event took place in Ss John and Martin Parish Church, run by Fr Dominic Innamorati scj.



## Notice from the General Council

▶ On September 21<sup>st</sup>, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life conceded to **Fr. Henri Karam Amorim an indult to leave the Congregation** and be incardinated into the Archdiocese of Campinas (Brazil). It is with sadness that we see Fr. Henri leave our religious Family. However we wish him to keep on developing a fruitful ministry as a diocesan priest.

## In memoriam

On October 12, **Mrs Kathleen Finucane**, mother of Br Liam SCJ, peacefully passed away at the age of 89, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. We offer Br Liam and his family members our heartfelt condolences reassuring them that we hold them and their dear one in our thoughts and our prayers.

## Vicariate of Italy

**Rome** ► On 5 and 6 October, the young lay «BetharrAmici» gathered in Rome for a new meeting of prayer and evangelization based on the theme of hope.

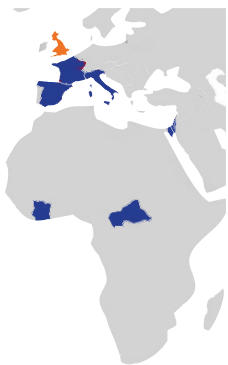
«Do not let your hope be taken away from you», this is the motto launched by Pope Francis to the youth of the whole world. The BetharrAmici treasured these words and full of hope ventured into a new mission to give to others this joy and love.

The days in Rome were marked by some reflection and sharing with Fr Simone Panzeri SCJ who highlighted the strong link between love and hope. The youth evangelized those present in Piazza del Popolo (Chiesa dei Miracoli) and then moved to Piazza San Pietro to listen to the words of Pope Francis during the Sunday Angelus.

## Vicariate of Ivory Coast

**Farewell to Fr Arsène Noba scj** ► Fr Arsène went to France (in the community of Anglet) for a new mission. Sunday, September 29, the Betharramite Community of Yamoussoukro and the parishioners of Saint Felix Parish joined together to wish farewell to Fr Arsène Noba scj, during a thanksgiving Mass presided by Fr Arsène himself. During the same celebration, the community welcomed Fr Luc Martial Kouadio.

**Adiapodoumé** ► Saturday, October 12, the formation house of Adiapodoumé



inaugurated the new academic year and the beginning of the community activities. The Eucharistic celebration was presided by Fr Jean-Luc Morin scj, Regional Superior. In his homily, Fr Jean-Luc encouraged the brothers to put more zeal into their studies, in their prayer and in their fraternal life in community. He also thanked the formators for the good work they are doing.

At the end of the celebration, the Regional Superior gave a camera to the communication team as a gift to help them carry out in a more effective way their duty in sharing the news with all the Betharramite communities throughout the world. On this occasion, Fr Jean-Luc blessed the new vehicle donated by "Au cœur du monde" to the formation house of Adiapodoumé. A fraternal meal brought the day to an end.

**Dabakala** ► In mid-October, during the visit of the Regional Superior, the religious leaders of the parish of Our Lady of the Poor gathered in Dabakala. After Fr François Tohonon moved to France (to Betharram) for a new mission, the Betharramite community is now made up of Fr Raoul Segla, Fr Elise Mambo and two newcomers: Fr Narcisse Zaolo and Br Habib, second-year novice who shares his noviciate with Br Oscar, a novice belonging to the Congregation of the Clerics of Saint Viator.

This is a positive sign of trust between congregations, in line with the style of the long-lasting cooperation with the Sisters of Providence of Peltre. To the newcomers and the «old hands», we wish a fruitful pastoral ministry ... carried out with the help of an all terrain vehicle bought thanks to the ge-

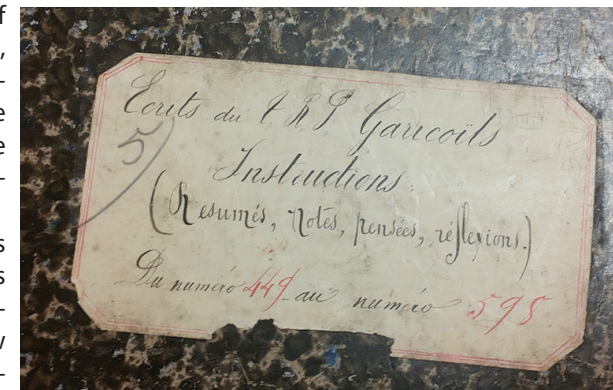
inspired by the life and work of St Michael, especially the icon, realised in 2008 by Fr Giancarlo Monzani scj and the retable by Sister Mercedes osd, in the oratory beside St Michael's bedroom in Betharram.

The object and aim of this publication in five languages (French, English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) is to draw the attention of an ever growing public to the life and works of St Michael. But this aim can only be reached with the help of the religious and Betharramite friends, who thanks to this booklet can bring them closer to St Michael and the Betharramite mission in the world.

Each Vicariate of the Congregation has already received (or is about to receive) the numbers they ordered – in their language – and will decide how best to distribute them. We are heartily grateful to all those who, thanks to their specific gifts, have made the realisation of this publication possible and to all those who will make it known.

The year 2013 saw the finalisation of some important works: the translation into Spanish, English and Italian of the three volumes of St Michael's letters:

- Recently, Fr Angelo Recalcati reedited and completed the work realised by the late Fr Miguel Martinez;
- Fr Dominic Innamorati finished translating the letters together with the raft of notes;
- Finally a Betharramite lay person, Mario Grugnola, has translated the letters into Ital-



ian together with a large part of the notes; Before undertaking printing, all these translations will have to undergo a thorough revision.

It will no longer be the privilege of French speaking Betharramite religious to read the correspondence of St Michael. Each one can, not only appreciate St Michael's spirituality, but also get to know his daily life as a spiritual guide and then be inspired by the counsels which St Michael offers to religious and laity, young or old, community superiors or young men researching their vocation, men or women whose difficulties and questions are those which we meet with ourselves.

There is another task which awaits us and of which we are beginning to see the fruits, namely the digital text of the note books - dating from the end of the 19th century - containing St Michael's manuscript copies which are kept at Betharram, and which were presented for the Diocesan Process in view of the beatification of our Founder. Fr Graziano Sala, General Secretary, has undertaken this project, with the help of Fr Jacky Moura and the novices. It is

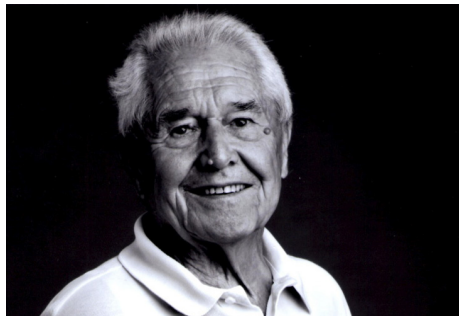
also the source of the extracts published each month in the NEF under the heading "Saint Michael Garicoits wrote". If there is anything else en route towards

publication, please let the team at NEF know who will be only too happy to pass on the information.

Enrico Frigerio, scj

MARIO GRUGNOLA AND HIS WIFE LAURA ATTEND THE SAN GUGLIELMO CHURCH, AT CASTELLAZZO DI BOLLATE, WHEREAS THEY LIVE IN ANOTHER PART OF MILAN PROVINCE. WHEN WE ASKED THE QUESTION "WHY EVER?" THEY ANSWERED WITHOUT HESITATION "BECAUSE THERE WE FIND THE REAL BETHARRAMITE WELCOME", A WELCOME TO WHICH MARIO REPLIES WITH A SPECIAL BRAND OF GOODNESS. AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF A BOOKLET ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE BETHARRAMITE FATHERS HE GOT DOWN TO THE TRANSLATION OF MORE THAN 600 LETTERS FROM ST MICHAEL IN OUR POSSESSION. ONCE THIS MONUMENTAL WORK WAS FINISHED WE ASKED HIM FOR HIS IMPRESSIONS.

The complete translation of the three volumes needed a little more than a year and a half. A year if you include the holidays and other activities. The first two volumes were finished last spring and I was able to give the good news by phone to Father Graziano on 14 May. Problems? There were plenty of them! Obviously the first one was getting used to St Michael's spirituality so as to interpret faithfully the ideas which gradually I was going to meet. To do this I had priceless help from Fr Ernesto Colli. His devoted collaboration, thanks to Skype, spared me the type of errors into which as a layman I could easily have fallen. Similarly for certain technical terms in Church vocabulary! Another problem was the desire to preserve the style and language of the Saint (on this point see the long introduction to Volume 1 of the Correspondence by Father Mieyaa) I don't know whether what I set out to do was achieved; if it was then how far? I tried to let my Italian reflect the period when the letters were written, at the same time avoiding unsuitable neologisms. Here I am appealing to the reader's leniency!



I would like to conclude by saying that this work was for me a great discovery. Discovering a man who, besides his stature as a religious, was deeply human and blessed with unbelievable energy. It is surprising in this day and age to see that his charisma is very modern, and expressed in everyday language: humility and obedience, abandonment to the will of God, love for the Incarnation, his role as confessor and spiritual director, his ability to rouse vocations. It doesn't often happen to be invited to translate a saint's letters. So, I would like to thank the Congregation for giving me the opportunity of enjoying this experience.

plants who had been taking a course in catechetics and lay people from our Missions. They were picking a fruit which I had never seen before and have never seen in England. It is, I am told, called Longon. Groups of people spread plastic sheets below the trees while climbers perilously walked along the branches to cut off with large knives the smaller ones bearing loads of fruit. Large numbers of people picked the fruit from the branches after it had fallen. Then it was bagged and sold to dealers on the spot. One doesn't have to travel far in Thailand to find patches of water. They can be found in all our missions and are a vital source of food in the form of fish. At the Seminary in Sampran one can find Fr Jirapat, the Superior, and the cook on certain days with their rods pulling out fish from the pool; meals for the whole community. Other communities have their own pools and fish tanks. But man does not live on bread alone and the mission provides spiritual nourishment by doing pastoral work in well over 200

villages in their care and in the hostels and schools as at Mophon, a Karen People's Hill Centre, and at Ban Pong, the Holy Family Centre, for children and young women of the Aka tribe. The former was started by fathers Seguinotte and Oxibar in the 1950s and the latter by father Pensa in the 1980s. He is still there today.

Betharram in Thailand is very blessed with vocations. Today the Fathers are reaping the harvest planted by our early missionaries from France, Italy and Spain. A few weeks ago three young men made their final profession in a packed Cathedral in Chiang Mae; a wonderful sign of solidarity: Thais from the town, Karens from the mountains and a beautiful Aka girls' choir from the North. Later this year there will be five young men enter the diaconate. The harvest is great and the call from nearby lands of Vietnam, Burma and China grows louder.

Dominic Innamorati, scj



## Give us this day our daily bread

APART FROM HIS MANY ACTIVITIES, WHETHER MINISTERING IN HIS MULTI-CULTURAL PARISH IN BIRMINGHAM OR SEATED AT HIS DESK, EDITING BOOKS OR WORKING ON TRANSLATIONS, FATHER DOMINIC, WITH HIS CHEERFULNESS AND APPROACHING 82ND BIRTHDAY, ALWAYS HAS A SUITCASE PACKED AND READY TO JET AWAY TO DISCOVER THE DAY-TO-DAY EXISTENCE OF HIS BROTHERS IN RELIGION AND IN HUMANITY. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED LAST JULY-AUGUST DURING A TRIP TO THAILAND: ARMED WITH HIS CAMERA HE LEARNT – AS IS HIS CUSTOM – A RICH LESSON OF LIFE IN THAT COUNTRY.



Living in town, we Europeans often take things for granted such as shopping for food, having electricity and running water. The priests and brothers of our mission in some cases do not have any of these facilities. During my visit this year I experienced a little of their life. One can admire the first Fathers who had virtually nothing when they began this mission.

My visit to Mephon coincided with the season for planting rice, the monsoon season. Being interested, I accompanied those who took part in it. To my surprise, I found everybody took part. The priests, students, sisters, the children and their parents who did this by way of paying back for their children's upkeep and education. All dressed to step into the muddy water of the paddy field which meant bare feet and shorts. The skilled planters picked up the floating batches of seedlings and planted them in neat rows moving from one paddy field to next: back breaking work. These were usually the parent farmers, the sisters, priests and students and the older children. The other children walked along the

lower embankments between the paddy fields distributing bunches of seedlings and bringing drinks and food from the house to the workers. Other children went foraging in the forests for various types of food: like bamboo shoots, certain wild vegetables, frogs or any other small animal that came their way or fish from the streams or pools.

All the mission stations had to support themselves by growing and finding food to survive. Each mission had to find food for the priests, the sisters, the brothers (usually two in each mission) and the children whose numbers ranged from 200 to 20. So besides the pastoral mission of the fathers, they had to work to survive.

Another venture I was able to see was fruit picking in a large area of land called the foundation, not too far from Chiang Mae, the main city of northern Thailand which is the centre of our mission. I accompanied a large number of members from our mission; priests, brothers and the pre-postu-

## by Father Sebastián García SCJ

Now as you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also. I say this not by way of command, but to test the genuineness of your love by your concern for others. For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (2 Cor. 8, 7-9)

Without doubt love the hidden life; but never fear to go out when ever the loving Providence of God gives you the opportunity of being useful to your neighbour, for love you have for the Lord must fill you with zeal to gain their hearts. (Corr. III, letter nr. 9ter)

**NARRATIO...** One of the texts that has the greatest impact on my religious life is precisely in the Second Corinthians: "Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake to make you rich out of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8,9). I believe it contains everything towards which I am aiming in my life as a religious. To know the visage of Christ, humble and obedient, and who became poor for my sake. This reminds me of what St Michael has to say: "He who took the place of all victims". I think of Jesus and of his humble life; I think of his life and the life of so many poor people. I think of my own life. I can see that I am not poor. To be a revolutionary like Jesus, who chooses the lowest place, strips himself of all his privileges, renounces his divine condition, poses question for me. I am deeply touched on seeing him so close to all mankind especially to those who feel their lives and faith in real danger and under threat. As a religious I cannot but be touched deeply as I contemplate the attitude of Jesus and

how close he is to the poor, to those who share his state and condition. Then I think of my own life, of my commitment to be as close as possible to the poorest, and especially to my consecration by the vow of poverty following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus' action is a liberating action: taking the lowest place, and from that position beginning to liberate the whole world. I think that this is what links me best to the example of the Incarnation: Jesus, a man amongst other men, who precedes others, situates himself on the same level, accepts all the condemnation for love's sake.

These texts remind me of two fundamental realities: on the one hand the mystical experience of God, present in the Gospel and among the People; on the other hand practising everything which is the fruit of that mystical experience in the liberating action. These texts tell me loud and clear that prayer, life, ministry, neighbour and charity are realities not to be separated. They go hand in glove. They are complementary. They sus-



tain each other. It is a truth showing the unity between the love of God and love of the neighbour. They are not to be separated. God and the People go together. They are part of the same reality. Mystical experiences beget the great desires of the heart; apostolic zeal demands that we present to the Lord those names, life histories, those faces, those sorrows, those wounds, our own but also those of the rest of mankind, those of the men and women of today who feel that their lives and faith are unsteady. There is a reality which I am trying to practice in my day-to-day existence and which I can detect in these texts namely the effort to be a "mystic of the incarnation"; but a mystic who is fully conscious! In a word I must be embedded in this reality. Jesus is one of us. He is like us in all things except sin. That is why I am trying to be like him - to be Father, priest, religious, consecrated. I am not "above" him. On the contrary, I feel myself more than ever a brother, equal to others, close to them. Consequently, cultivating the culture of meeting, getting out so as to meet the rest of mankind. As Pope Francis says: "Get out of your caves and sacristies" so as to have a genuine meeting with the people. That is what I live in my daily life with the young people in the colleges with

their specific problems: abuse, depression, abandon, anger, relationships, solitude, temptation to throw everything up, to let go. I live it in my particular situation as "priest of the great questions". That's how some people call me! I am always asking "How are you?", "What's happening?" "Are you happy?" "Does this satisfy you?" "How are you coping with this in your life?" It is I who asks the important questions. Quite simply because they are the questions which I ask myself every day. I don't give up trying: my desires, my dreams, fresh horizons. A few days ago a brother was describing me as a passionate person. I think that he was right. I can't be otherwise; a lot of my brothers must put up with the consequences, especially those living under the same roof: Fathers Giancarlo and Bruno. I feel that I have to deepen this passion so as to get to know it better, take care of it, work at it, shape it, let it be transformed under the action of a God who is merciful. That is where my mystical experience of prayer and God resides. How can I direct my passion and then be a passionate about the youth, the poor. I am deeply convinced that they are the two poles of life towards which God is directing me. A preferential choice for the poor and the youth, live with them,

force of Jesus: precede others, suffer with them, share their meals, their bread and their wine. ....And as I announce life to them tell them that the most important in the eyes of God isn't sin, the canonical irregular situation, morality, the commandments.... No, the truest reality in the eyes of God is the dignity of knowing that we are his children. On a daily basis I keep on telling myself this to be able to live in freedom. This is what I repeat to the young people and to the poor every time that I have the possibility of being with them.

suffer with them, share their hopes and joys, their sufferings and sadness. I feel that I am being urged to be faithful to the liberating

Here is the prayer which accompanies my commitment and my mission:

*Lord, forgive me for getting used to seeing that the children appear to be eight years old when in reality they are 13.*  
*Lord, forgive me for getting used to being mud spattered; I can get rid of it, not the youngsters.*  
*Lord, forgive me for being able to support the stinking waters which I can avoid, but not the youngsters.*  
*Lord, forgive me for switching on the light, forgetting that they can't do it.*  
*Lord, forgive me for going on hunger strike; they cannot, because nobody can go on strike over his own hunger.*  
*Lord, forgive me when I say "man does not live by bread alone" without fighting for all I am worth to get their bread for them.*  
*Lord, I ask for the grace to love them for themselves and not for myself.*  
*Lord, I ask for the grace to die for them; help me to live for them.*  
*Lord, I ask to be with them at the hour of light. Amen.*

**Father Carlos Mugica (1930-1974)**

**Father Carlos Mugica**, a priest close to the Peronist left-wing, was assassinated in Buenos Aires on 11 May 1974 in front of the church of San Francisco Solano, in the working-class district of Mataderos, where he had just finished celebrating Mass and talking with a couple of young people who were about to marry. "Those who were militants in political formations considered him a political leader. But for the people of the Villa he was simply 'el padrecito'", says Guillermo Torres, his current successor at the church of Christ Obrero in Villa Retiro. On 9 April 1999 the remains of Father Mugica were transferred to the chapel of the Villa where he spent his priesthood. Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio on that occasion prayed as follows: "The death of Father Carlos, for his material killers, for those who were the ideologues of his death, for the complicit silences of most of society and for the times that, as members of the Church, we did not have the courage to denounce his assassination, Lord have mercy".