

were adopted by the Chapter of 1919 and approved by the Holy See 23 February 1921.

However quite a few were not entirely satisfied. Having constantly to refer to the Code of Canon Law produced a feeling of annoyance especially among those who could not have easy access to the text in Latin. A new revision seemed necessary and the Chapter of 1947 seemed the right time to realise it.

The 1947 Constitutions

This Chapter meeting voted important changes in the Congregation, not as far as religious life itself was concerned, but in the organisation and government. Up until then the Congregation had one shape.

Now it was opened up, decentralised and divided into provinces. These new organisms modified relationships considerably, as well as the administration and the government.

It was finally decided to carry out a more general revision and the new Constitutions were approved by the Sacred Congregation 3 June 1947.

After the Council a much greater renewal was called for, this time at the invitation of the Church.

As is generally known this work is still on-going.

Pierre Duvignau, SCJ

History of the Rule of Life written in 1968-69

Notes from the General Council

► On 25 September 2013, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, presented to the **diaconate** Br. **Wagner Aparecido Ferreira** (Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, Vicariate of Brazil)

CONGREGATION MEETINGS IN JANUARY 2014 IN ROME (GENERALATE HOUSE) :

- **Organisation Team for the retraining course in 2015** : from January 8 to 12 (Fr. Jacky Moura, Fr. Gustavo Agin, Br. Andrew Ferris, Fr. Gianluca Limonta, Fr. Graziano Sala)
- **Formation Team** : from January 13 to 16 (Frs. Laurent Bacho, Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin, Gustavo Agin [replacing Fr. Guido Garcia unable to attend], Chan Kunu, Gianluca Limonta, Jacky Moura for the formation team; Frs Simone Panzeri and Stervin Selvadass are also invited by the Superior General to take part in this meeting)
- **Council of the Congregation with the Regional Vicars**: from January 19 to 25 (The Superior General, the General Council, the Regional Superiors and the Regional Vicars)



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

86
2013

Generalate House
via Angelo Brunetti, 27
00186 Rome (Italy)

Telephone +39 06 320 70 96
Fax +39 06 36 00 03 09
Email - nef@betharram.it

www.betharram.net

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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE
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FAMILY NEWS

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

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14th October 2013

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

In the place of all the victims

The Founding Manifesto composed as a Preface to the 1838 Constitutions, gives us a triple offering of Christ, humble and obedient, speaking of himself as a victim: "he took the place of all the victims", "holocausts and victims for sin did not please you, so this is why I said: "Here I am", "from that moment onwards he has assumed the state of victim".

It is an extract from Psalm 39 (40) which compares the passage as a ritual sacrifice from the Temple to that of a human existence. "Sacrifice and offerings you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said "Here I am". In the scroll of the book it is written of me I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart" (Ps 39: 7-10). The offering of the faithful believer for the fulfilment of God's will now takes the place of sacrifices, holocausts and liturgical victims; from now onwards the law is the one engraved in his heart.

The mystery of the Incarnation is to be explained through the reality of this substitution. The Epistle to the Hebrews refers to Jesus himself quoting this passage of

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victims are individuals and, in his Incarnation, Jesus is one with them, being like them, and being in the same situation.

To understand this better, it might be more profitable to use the meditation which St Ignatius uses in the Spiritual Exercises. There he shows us how the Three Persons of the Trinity view the world:

1) "Contemplate the different persons. Those on earth, with all their variety of dress, and behaviour,

white and black, at peace or war, crying or laughing, well or ill, being born or dying, etc.

2) Observe the Three Divine Persons, seated on the royal throne proper to their divine majesty. They are watching the great round of the earth's surface, with all its people in a great blindness, going to Hell when they die.

3) Contemplate Our Lady greeted by the Angel; reflecting on this, derive some benefit." (SE 106)

The retreatant is invited to see human nature through the eyes of the Trinity. The Three Persons see humanity in all its diversity, confronted, divided, there are those at peace, laughing, healthy, new born; others at war, crying, ill, dying. Human nature which the Trinity contemplates on the day of the Annunciation is in the same situation as that contemplated by the retreatant today.

In those days as today relationships between individuals demand the respect

the psalm according to the Septante version. In this translation there is no mention of "you have given me an open ear" but rather "you prepared a body for me" (Heb. 10) and St Michael adds: "you appointed it for me". From this it can easily be concluded that by becoming man, Jesus entered this world and offered himself to his Father to carry out his will, making all things pleasant. There is no need to offer sacrifices: by offering himself Jesus takes the place of all the victims on the cross, through love, for the salvation of all mankind.

Article 115 of our Rule of Life says: "In men and peoples, marked by all kinds of injustice and poverty, we contemplate the disfigured face of Jesus Christ who 'took the place of all the victims'. So far the word 'victim' has a liturgical undertone, even if the offering of one's life by the believer as by Christ assumes a living dimension. In the Rule of Life the meaning of the word has an existential meaning. The

CONGREGATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS OF BETHARRAM

9 – The 1901, 1919 & 1947 Constitutions

The 1901 Constitutions

Ten years later Fr Etchecopar was no longer there to see the completion of his work, as much for the Rules as for the introduction of the Cause of our holy Founder. This was to take place in 1899. However Fr Etchecopar had been given a mandate by the 1896 Chapter to ask the "Holy See at the end of the decennium due to expire in four years time, for the definitive approval of the Constitutions." This was obtained by his successor, Fr Victor Bourdenne. These Constitutions barely differed from the preceding ones except on two points which would bring them up to the required Normes:

1. A few changes were made concerning the government of the Institute and Elections.
2. The chapter "Special Devotions of the Institute" was considerably shortened, losing its chapter 3, and doing away with the *Ecce Venio*.

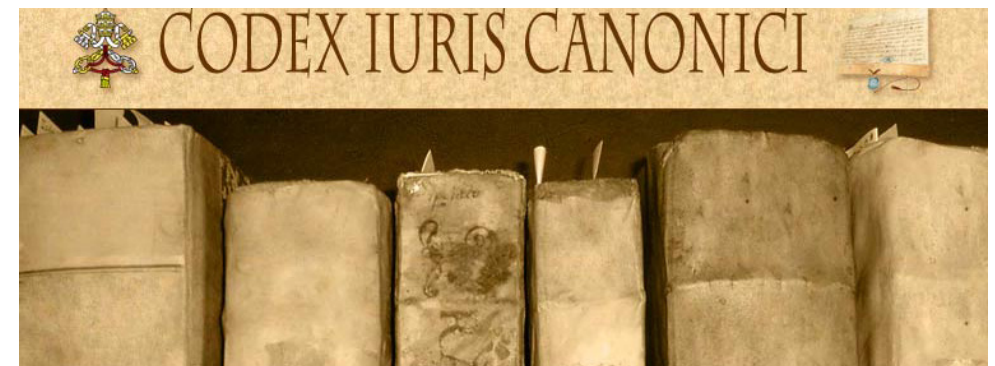
This so called definitive approval of our

Constitutions, obtained by decree 6 September 1901, was soon to be challenged by the apparition of the new code of Canon Law.

The 1919 Constitutions

This new Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1917, contained a complete treatise "De Religiosis" containing no fewer than 195 articles. Consequently all Religious Institutes had to take a look at their rules and make them conform to the dispositions of Canon Law. Canonists were called upon to prepare this revision. The big question was to know whether to introduce the text itself of the treatise into the Constitutions which would have resulted in a considerably heavier volume or simply to take those elements which were strictly necessary, and refer the reader to the Code itself whenever possible. In our case we adopted this second solution.

The new Constitutions, with few changes,



OCTOBER

15	Feliz cumpleaños Happy birthday 55 ans de profession 45 años de profesión 45 ans de profession	P. Osvaldo Caniza Fr. Wilfred Poulose Perepadan P. Pierre Caset P. Gaspar Fernández Pérez P. Michel Vignau
19	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Javier Irala Cabrera
20	Buon compleanno	P. Aurelio Riva
21	Buon compleanno	F. Severino Urbani
22	Buon compleanno	P. Romano Martinelli
23	Happy Birthday Buon compleanno	Fr. Terence O'Malley P. Raimondo Perlini
24	65 ans de profession	P. Mirco Trusgnach
27	Happy Birthday	Br. Andrew Athit Nyomtham
28	Feliz cumpleaños	PP. Tarcisio Vera, Sebastián García
29	Bom aniversário	Ir. Davi da Silva Lara
30	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Pierre Monnot Mons. Claudio Silvero Acosta

NOVEMBER

2	Feliz cumpleaños Bom aniversário	P. Carlos Ecurra Cantero Ir. Wagner Ferreira Aparecida
3	65 ans de profession	PP. Bertrand Salla, Gabriel Verley
5	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin
8	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Firmin Worou Ogoubé
9	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Jean-Baptiste Olçomendy
12	Buon compleanno Feliz cumpleaños	P. Carlo Luzzi P. Constancio Erobaldi

due to the unique dignity of each one in the heart of their diversity. For those who have faith the source of all this lies in the paternity of God, through which we are all his sons and daughters and consequently brothers and sisters. There can be no excuse for any kind of haughtiness in our dealings with others, any more than in the fact of looks, wealth, power, knowledge, education, standing.

It can happen, in fact it is happening all the time and at every level that the one who feels superior to others, dominates them, looking down upon them, depreciates them and reduces them to subjection (an experience in the life of Jeremiah). Anyone acting like this is a torturer, humiliating whoever is considered to be inferior and consequently feeling destroyed, undervalued, treated like a victim. Such a humiliation is the refusal of one's dignity, refusal of his human rights, and the limits set to his abilities. It can sometimes happen that an individual treated like a victim can suddenly become a torturer himself. This even happens between nations.

It was this humanity that Jesus chose for himself the day of the Annunciation. He knew it very well and freely offered himself to his Father to be one among many. He ran the risk of being treated like a victim, just like the way so many men and women see their dignity trampled under foot. The Father and the Holy Spirit also knew the situation of humanity created by them in their image and likeness. In their goodness they accepted that the Son should run the risk of being treated in the same way as men were accustomed to act. We know well what the result was: as he was being ill treated he showed the merciful love of the Father – the greatest sign of love there is, namely giving one's life for the loved one; "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down freely" (John 10.18)

The religious of Betharram are now to practise this in their turn, seeking to be as close as possible to all victims so that they may feel the closeness of the consoling love of God as manifested in the total commitment of Jesus.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj



Saint Michael Garicoits wrote...

to sinners?

No, although he seems to give a lot to his enemies; he has only committed himself for his servants. Only they are his children constituting his family. I'm ruined! Are you poor? Hand on heart did you go seeking the kingdom of God? No! Then stop grumbling! (N 416)

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2013 (2)

IN 1986 WHEN HE LAUNCHED THE WORLD YOUTH DAYS JEAN PAUL II WANTED TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THE YOUTH OF THE WHOLE WORLD, SHOW THEM THAT THE CHURCH HAD TRUST IN THEM, AND SHARE HIS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WITH THEM. SINCE THEN THE WYD HAVE BECOME A REAL "FESTIVAL OF FAITH." ALONG WITH THE YOUNG PILGRIMS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE MANY RELIGIOUS ARE NOW TAKING PART IN THIS ADVENTURE OF FAITH-SHARING WHICH IS SPENT IN SINGING, DANCING, SLEEPING OUTDOORS IN A SLEEPING BAG, LONG WALKS WITH BUBBLING YOUTH. THIS EXPERIENCE LEAVES A LASTING IMPRESSION ON THESE RELIGIOUS.



FR SEBASTIAN GARCIA SCJ, ARGENTINA.

Three adjectives can describe World Youth Day:

- Joyful: it was the young peoples' festival of life and faith!
- Intense: that was the rhythm of our days. For the celebrations singing and dancing were followed by times of profound silence and prayer; then there was the distance between us and what was organised on the beach at Copacabana. We could follow the whole journey in the middle of the crowds with the simple worry of not missing the train or the Underground taking us back to the school where we were staying.
- Fraternal: All of us who took part in the WYD felt that we were really brothers, regardless of the differences of culture or language, regardless of the climate, the rain, the cold or distances. This was of minor importance. What was really important was to have enjoyed the presence of Jesus and of Pope Francis in this new Pentecost for the Church. What I experienced with the young people was most enriching; I felt that I had grown in faith and hope. It was really an event of the Holy Spirit where God pours out his Grace.

The presence of God in the WYD was really felt here in Rio. The fact to have shared their lives, as much during the Days as during the pre-Days in Paulinia, where we got to know the parishioners, visiting them in their homes, going on mission in different quarters, was a most fruitful experience. Doors were wide open, glasses of a cooling drink of water against the fatigue, faith shared in the prayers which each recited in his own tongue. And at Rio itself the festivity was total. What was most extraordinary was seeing the joy of the young pilgrims and of a Pope so young in spirit, just like ourselves



Vicariate of Central Africa

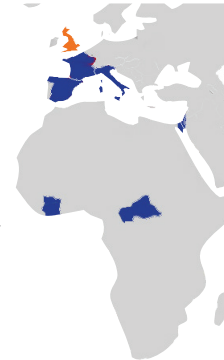
Sack at the Bouar community

► «In the night of September 17th, Fr. Beniamino Gusmeroli and Bro. Martial Maru were at the mercy of rebels of Seleka, who gagged and threatened to kill the doorkeeper, then entered the House armed with Kalashnikovs.

The five men of the commando were armed to the teeth; foreigners of Sudanese origin. Once Bro. Martial was gagged and tied up, they made their way to Fr. Beniamino's room where they took all they could find. As the father was trying to resist, they tied him up and gagged him too. Afterwards, they turned everything upside down and took everything of value: money, computers, camera, phone.

To cover their escape, they took hostage Bor. Martial – whom they released a little later – and took his Passport, (obtained after months of delay complete with the visa granted by the Italian Embassy in Yaoundé for his projected stay in Italy.)

Thus was carried out a new act of looting on the part of the rebels of the Seleka, now uncontrolled and uncontrollable by the authorities. This action is a sign of a deterioration of the situation in the Central African Republic."



Vicariate of Argentina

Barracas ► September 12th the students of the secondary school of the Sacred Heart received the missionary mandate to go to share their lives and celebrate their faith with their poorest and most marginalized brothers in the northwest of Argentina. On behalf of the whole ecclesial community, the children of the primary school, their teachers and the non teaching staff gave them the missionary cross.

Vicariate of Brazil

The festival goes on! ► On 20 September, in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception of Conceição do Rio Verde, Br Francisco de Assis dos Santos was ordained a priest. The celebration was presided over by Bishop William Porto, Bishop of Sete Lagoas (MG). The rite was attended by many Betharramite religious, diocesan priests, religious of other congregations and seminarians. Also present were the Regional Superior, Fr Gustavo Agin scj, Fr Javier Irala (Regional Vicar of Paraguay) and Fr Angelo Recalcati (Regional Secretary).

These have represented the Vicariate of Paraguay. Many lay Betharramites from Paulinia, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Passa Quatro and Brumadinho wanted to attend the celebration. Congratulations Chiquinho!



OF THE CONGREGATION

had borne him in her womb – his beloved mother. Today the son will rest with the Father beside his mother. Dear relatives of Father Omer, dear Mr. Amedee Koutouan, we know what you mean to Father Omer and what he means for you. May the Lord himself wipe away your tears! May the memory of your son continue to live among you!

Finally, for you Omer I am going to repeat what I was saying to you on 12 October last when together with the parish community we were wishing you farewell for the one year's formation at Mater Christi at Bobo Dioulasso: Today the parish community thanks God for the two years of fruitful ministry of our brother Omer, at the same time showing him the route for a new mission entrusted to him by the Congregation for the Lord.

"Brother Omer, for you marriage was the consecration of your life to God for ever; it was the total offering of your life for God's mission; here too fidelity was demanded! As for you, after two years spent with the community of Adiopodoume as PP of St Bernard's Parish, continuing to progress with Christ meant that you accepted to leave us for another mission. We know that for us Betharramite community and for the parishioners it was not without a twinge of sadness. But you accepted to go with the conviction that since it was God's will, this change could only be beneficial for us (Betharramite religious, parishioners of St Bernard's) and for you.

As you are about to leave Adiopodoume, your Anono, I thank God for the fact that you were the sacrament of the presence of Jesus Christ among us. With us and

with all your heart you tried to share your own closeness to Christ and to bear witness to it as best you could. You helped us to discover and deepen how much Christ gives Himself to us to the utmost. You were sufficiently open and confident to urge us forward always to choose life. You gave us the meaning and helped us appreciate our daily and Sunday Eucharist to fortify our links to Christ who loves us with a great love.

May the Spirit of the Father and the Son who gathers us in a single body, make us grow in fraternal communion. May he help us to make of our lives gifts given for love".

We are heartbroken but our Hope is not diminished. Our Hope is upright, facing the love of the Lord. He alone knows how to wipe away all tears; he alone makes us sow in tears, so that we can go out and reap as we sing.

It is with this expectation that we ask the Lord to welcome Omer, priest of Jesus Christ, Herald of his Word and witness to his love, to welcome him into the joy reserved for his faithful servants. May Mary, Mater Christi, Mother of Christ, alongside whom you progressed during this formation year, welcome you beside her Son to share henceforth the happiness of eternity.

Goodbye Omer, and may we meet again one day, God willing, in the house of God, our Father. Amen.

there present. We appreciated the presence of Pope Francis with his mannerisms, his words of encouragement, his message, his preaching; he bucked us up by his simple presence.

The fact of being present at the WYD with all those young people encourages me to renew how I can be a companion to all those young people whom God puts on my way to be a presence beside them; to "make noise, look after the young and the old, and not to tone down my faith" as the Pope invited us to do. It encourages me to be "a saint in jeans and trainers", a believer who can be believed.

The fact that I got to know young Betharramites from the four corners of the world made me aware of the internationality of the Congregation, of the diversity of Betharramite looks in the world, and consider that to be a rich experience.

As I return home from Rio I know that the WYD are not over yet but are the beginning of a fresh departure in my daily task of being of service to my brothers, especially the poor and the young, and those whose life and faith are most at risk, so as to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to them.



Br. Emile Garat sqj, France

We spent ten days in Brazil where we discovered a faith both colourful and joyful. From 18 to 23 July we were in the diocese of Paulina. We were welcomed by the Betharramite community and parishioners who received us with great simplicity



and joy. The young people with their Betharramite leaders came from Paraguay, Argentina, Italy and France. It was a time of fraternal meetings, prayer, sharing, visits and festivities. We were very touched by the welcome which we received from our Brazilian brothers. We were able to discover the reality of life for our Brazilian brothers.

As for me as leader the WYD has been a time of listening to the young people so as to be aware of what today's young people are going through in their everyday life. I had the joy of accompanying Camille and Aude and sometimes we were able to share on how we live our faith in everyday life. To be a leader is a privilege on condition to be challenged on how to nourish one's faith and be faithful to it and when one has chosen to give one's life for the service of God and of man. The "Here I am, Lord" is the reply to be given every day; it invites me to reflect with my brothers in the Vicariate on how to build or at least to encourage the fraternity of young people based on the spirituality of St Michael. That is a dream that could become a reality.



Br. Sixto Benitez sqj, Paraguay

Thanks to the invitation from the Congregation, I was lucky to be present for the first time at the WYD which were held in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The day before at Paulinia where I shared the daily existence of the young people from Our Lady of Betharram parish enabled me to have a very fruitful meeting with other young people very committed in their local Church and with other young people from several countries where the Congregation is present.

The day spent with the Pope at Rio de Janeiro

bolstered me up no end; I was swept up when I saw so many young people captivated by the Lord, through the person of the Pope. I am speechless when I try to say how rich this experience was for me: to feel and see how God constantly makes his presence felt in my life through those who follow Christ without ever expecting any reward from him. The love which unites us all, whatever our nationality fills us with the same faith and desire: reach happiness. Saint Michael would tell us to desire this same happiness for our brothers. Three words come to mind just now to sum up this experience: love, kindness and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.



FINALLY IN ADDITION TO THESE MEMORIES AND ACCOUNTS, FATHER GUSTAVO AGIN, REGIONAL SUPERIOR OF THE FATHER ETCHECOPAR REGION, OFFERS US HERE A REFLEXION ON THIS EVENT WHICH HAS OPENED SO MANY HEARTS AND SATISFIED THEM.

How did you get through the WYD experience at the time of the 150th anniversary of the death of Saint Michael Garicoits?

We are going through a structural crisis, principally in Latin America; where there are divisions and individualism, you can feel the need for meetings. So from the point of view of the Church and society this experience was like a great oasis in the middle of a desert. The drought of routine had been bathed in fresh water. The youth were able to speak their joy and the older people recall their youth. In the midst of the choral assembly of 3.500.000 participants (followed by hundreds of millions of the faithful thanks to the media) there was Pope Francis, his personality and his language; courage for the mission, care of those who are suffering (young or old) and the call for a meeting built on care for the poor.

A lot of the youth who no longer found their place in the Church have had their hopes revived. Used as they were to seeing through the media an image of a Church in its

comfort zone, closed and fearful, many of them – whether believing or not – have discovered that force overcomes weakness and that God loves us through it. No philosophical approach, but a power animated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ who doesn't leave us alone but sends us out to share the joy of the Good News. I imagine that during those days every young Betharramite will have identified with this expression of our charism in which the Heart of Jesus is "like the spouse leaves his room and rushes into the carrier with the joy of a hero."

The youth needed to feel in the depths of their being the same experience as St Michael who full of the vigour of youth didn't hesitate climbing the mountains of indifference and cold to overcome the obstacles of his day for his heart was on fire from the moment he had come to know the Love of Jesus, dissolved in gentleness and charity, a love which he extended to each of his brothers.

As I see it the WYD at Rio made possible the loving meeting between God and Man, which we call the Incarna-

the body but cannot kill the soul" Jesus tells us.

Who are we blaming? God? If it is God, let us blame Him for giving us Omer in the first place, for calling him and bestowing on him the priceless grace of priesthood. Let us blame God for endowing Father Omer with all those qualities, talents and possibilities which won us over and which we admired. Then we will know that we owe God an immense song of gratitude.

Yes, we want to say "Thank you" to the Lord! Thank you for giving us Father Omer. Thank you for sending him to this life. Thank you for calling him to divine life by Baptism. Thank you for associating him to the priesthood of Christ. Thank you for letting us see in his generosity and dedication what Christ's love for mankind means. Even if it only lasted a fraction of a second, we believe that it belongs to those things which have a beginning in time but know no ending because they are like the living water of which Jesus speaks in the Gospels. They are springs, springs gushing with eternal life.

Yes, Father Omer, we have brought your remains before the Lord because we believe that your life has not been destroyed, simply changed. We know before this altar where we often celebrated with you the sacrifice of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, that he who eats the flesh of the Risen Christ and drinks his blood has eternal life. During two years of your ministry it was here that you pronounced the Words of Eternal Life. It was here that you consecrated the Bread of Life, that you distributed this Bread, the Real Bread, which gives real Life. Why should we be feeling

sorry for you; you have reached the goal which you had fixed for your life?

It was here that on 5th June 2010 Omer responded to Christ's call, verified by the Bishop, "Here I am, send me out to proclaim the Gospel and to celebrate the sacraments in the footsteps of the Apostles". Today, three years later, Omer lying before this altar says to Christ: "Accept me!" And we who are here beside him make our prayer to the Lord: "Accept him, Lord, with the same mercy as you showed him during his life time."

We have no intention of making heavy weather of a life which is over and which we consider short, because our judgement is short. However his life has been much longer than what Christ spent on earth to win our salvation. Yes, we have no intention of making heavy weather of a life which seems like a shot. That was a sorry night Thursday 19th September- a tragic night. A phone call! We can't understand what is happening. Or rather we end by understanding in depth that our lives are in God's hands, that God calls us when he wants to, where he wants, and how he wants, and that finally the end of all true Christian prayer is to accept God's will, even when it disturbs and mystifies us. What must have been the Way of the Cross of Fr Omer from the moment of his hospitalisation in Pisam? Did he, like Christ, say "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" What we are sure of is that his Way of the Cross led into eternal life.

On 17 December 1978 a child was born against whom death waged a terrible crime by depriving him of the person who

IN MEMORIAM

Father Omer KOUTOUAN Nanghuuy

Abidjan (Anono), 17 December 1978 - Abidjan, 19 September 2013

Homily by Fr. Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin scj during the prayer vigil for Father Omer at St Bernard's Church in Adiapodoumé

A priest's life is an invitation to the Hope of Jesus Christ which he announces as the God who comes into our lives to give them meaning, their real meaning. The Hope of that decisive meeting with God which he announces as he celebrates the mystery of the Risen Christ.

Why should we be astonished if God invites a priest at the prime of life to enter into the fullness of this Hope?

The knock at our door which the Lord has just struck may seem hard for us. Yet he warned us himself "Behold I stand at the door and knock". If we are surprised it is because once more the Lord wants us to realise that our thoughts are not his thoughts, that our ways are not his ways. So we must dry up our human tears – too human perhaps – so that the dampness will not extinguish the flame of our faith. But a faith which wants to be true does not run away from questions.

Here we are before the coffin of a priest, that is of a man who heard God's call, who answered "yes", "here I am" to the Lord and who gave his life to announcing the Word of God in a world which has an ever greater need to hear the message. No sooner has this voice been heard than suddenly the silence of death extinguishes it just like the sea breeze extinguishes the flame which was lit with great difficulty



Here we are before the coffin of a young priest whose availability, zeal, gentleness, fervour and dedication promised a bright future. A young priest on whom our religious family was building so much hope and so many projects. And in a matter of a few hours the whole thing has collapsed like a house of cards.

We have to ask ourselves: Why? My God Why? Why has the Lord allowed this? Why was this his will? Why has the Lord done this? It is up to each one to put the intensity and force according to the measure of affection, friendship and fraternity.... In a word his relationship with Father Omer. For with him the well spring of generosity has suddenly dried up, a light has been extinguished. Things will never be the same again.

What are we crying about? Who are we weeping for? Why are we weeping? Who are we blaming? Men? What can they do against death when the inescapable hour has struck? "Fear not those who can kill

tion and which our Father Founder felt and enjoyed in his inner being. Eternal Love became Man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; she sang for joy just as the young pilgrims sang in the streets of Rio.

What are we to retain of such an experience for the VIBRA and the Region?

- First of all let's say how friendly the Brazilians are, how joyful and happy to form a People of God whose faith and devotion are very expressive. The Region can be happy to have been able to contemplate this faith at close range and propose it to everybody so that it may become Light of the world and Salt of the earth. I think that the ease with which so many people come into contact and were able to share precious moments is the result of that docility in the face of the call of Jesus inviting us to become like little children. In the smallest of God's creatures shines the faith of the young. The Pope's actions when dealing with children, the poor, the aged and the disabled, placed us face to face with the Gospel, in line with St Mathew's as-

sertion "whenever you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me". (Matthew 25, 40)

The WYD showed the world that the ability to cooperate with the work of the Risen Christ, the on-going mission among the men and women of today is possible because the yeast is already in the dough.

The Region was able to show all the young Betharramites from all over the world that to belong to Christ and follow him is well worth it! Sharing with everyone the joy of being who we are without being ashamed of being so few. Longing to learn again what it is to be a Church whose doors are wide open and who wants to leave nobody away from Christ.

In our viewing of the Kingdom, the WYD touched us to the very heart of our being and urged us forward to construct God's Kingdom without delay, and without reserve, like the witnesses and prophets of a new world.

In the name of all our scj brothers and laity of Latin America, I want to thank all those who with joy and fraternal availability made such an unforgettable experience possible.

Session for the religious brothers at Betharram

FROM THE EVERY CORNER OF THE CONGREGATION (ENGLAND, ARGENTINA, CENTRE-AFRICA, IVORY COAST, FRANCE, ITALY AND PARAGUAY) 24 RELIGIOUS-BROTHERS SPENT PART OF THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2013 IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THEIR VOCATION FOR THE SIMPLE PLEASURE OF BEING TOGETHER IN FAMILY AND OF RENEWING THEIR ENERGIES.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! (Psalm 133)

Impossible to find a better summary of the session 8-15 September than in this line from Psalm 133: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

Indeed it was very good for the 14 religious-brothers from six different vica-

riates to be in Betharram together, at the initiative of the St Michael Garicoits Region in the thick of the Jubilee Year. It was only meant to be a Franco-Italian meeting, it turned out to be a Congregation event in a typically Betharramite style: simplicity, cordiality, dedication.

It was good to get to know each other better – from Europe, Africa and Ame-

rica – during the festive evenings (for memory: musical chairs helped with introductions!), all kinds of exchanges, prayer and even fits of laughter.

It was good too to walk in the footsteps of our Founder:

- Have a detailed visit not only of the sanctuary but also the farm and see to what extent the Brothers placed their mark on Betharram – the place and its works.
- Reread one's personal "sacred story" at Ibarre, under a steady shower of rain, and at Garacotchea celebrate the poverty and the beauty of those early days.
- Meet up with the descendants of the Anguelus at Oneix, the Benedictines at Belloc, and every time feel St Michael ever more present, and at the same time feel assured in one's specific vocation.
- Discover Bayonne Cathedral and the old Carmelite monastery in Pau; reflect on connections with the past and have a meal with the community.
- Return to Betharram like returning home; take strength in one's commitment with talks and sharing on the three vows and the mission.
- Renewal of religious profession in the oratory, during a celebration which was both intimate and solemn when the moment came for us to sign the act of consecration on the very desk be-



longing to St Michael.

- Be with the People of God at Lourdes Grotto, in the sanctuary and on the hill of Calvary; be at one with the local church for the feast of the Holy Cross, and with the universal Church through the presence of Mgr Vincent Landel.

It was good, despite the language barrier, to be able to talk about past wounds, about today's toil and future challenges. It was good and necessary to write down our convictions, and to call on the Congregation of the Sacred Heart to be our witness.

It was good and necessary to return to what is most important: as religious, whether ordained or not, we are brothers first of all. We inherit this fraternity and it binds us. The religious-brother has an important role to play: in community he recalls our common identity and fidelity to the Family; outside he is the bridge between priests and laity, through proximity, service and evangelical witness in everyday realities.

What prayer is all this meditation inspiring to me?

The prayer I am frequently driven to, is a variation of a prayer of St. Ignatius, that is very popular in 12-step fellowships,

which is all about handing over our lives to God's care and asking him to use us with all our faults and failings for the good of others:

*My God I offer myself to you
to build with me and do with me what you will.
Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do your
will.
Take away my difficulties
that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help
of your power your love and your way of life.
May I do your will always
Amen*





Fr. Austin Hughes with Fr. Gaspar Fernández at 2011 General Chapter

return to three things: memory, prayer and song. Firstly the memories of all the good things that God has done for me in the past are a way of reconnecting with a sense of God's power and his care. Secondly prayer (especially the Examen) reinforces this, when I recall all the things to thank him for and the ways in which he speaks to me day by day. Thirdly music has always been important to me and I frequently sing to myself songs and psalms that remind me of God's power and protection. A chorus from one such song (found in both Micah and Isaiah) is a favourite of mine:

*This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this
That you act justly, that you love tenderly,
That you walk humbly with your God.*
Current political correctness discourages us from using the name Yahweh in public but I still sing it to myself in private!

On what do I feel driven to focus my attention?

Currently I feel driven to focus in the joy of Christian living, and the joy in our vocation. Without joy our witness is lacking. But joy is something deep not superficial. It is not just about laughing out loud (though that helps!) but rather about a deep contentment with who I am and where I am. I come to admire more and more those lay people I minister to, who are carrying very heavy burdens (a handicapped child ... an alcoholic son ... a life-threatening illness, etc.) and who can still smile and be at peace with themselves. I find myself 'evangelised' by them and they reinforce my religious vocation.

Which aspects have had a major impact on my personal story as religious of Betharram?

The encouragement to be brave or be unafraid is one I frequently return to, partly because I am naturally a cautious person, and partly because I fear making mistakes. Back in 2008 when I was unexpectedly appointed Regional Superior, I felt very afraid, inadequate and very alone. As we are directed in the scriptures I asked advice of a few wise people including a neighbouring priest much respected as a spiritual director. He asked me the simple question: 'has God ever let you down in the past?' When I responded 'no' then he said 'well, he won't let you down in the future will he?'

This simple assurance from someone unfamiliar with St. Michael put me on track with trust, a key virtue for St. Michael.

How do I try to live what these extracts show me?

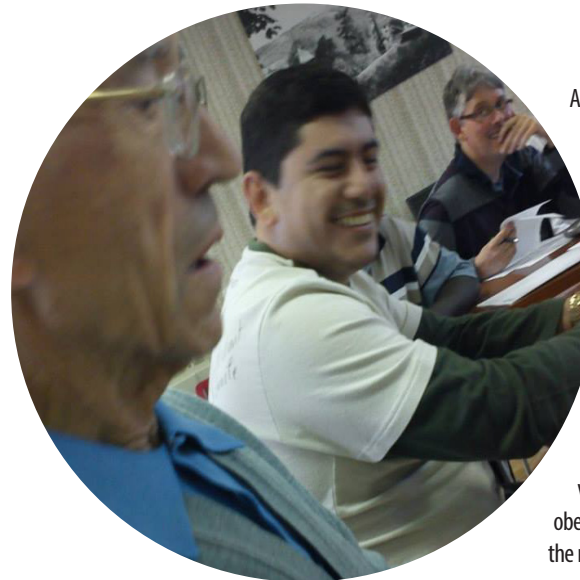
When the demons of fear assail me, then I

It is right to thank all those who organised and hosted this special occasion and were part of it. It is right and fitting to thank the Lord who called us, consecrated us and sent us in our divers ministries, to a universal brotherhood. For a whole week we enjoyed it. It is up to us now to live by it more and more, day by day, with all the love necessary and humour.

Yes, how good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity. It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard of missionaries. It is like the dew which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing life for evermore. (cf. Psalm 133).

Jean-Luc Morin, scj

+ FDV To our Brothers



As part of the jubilee of St Michael Garicoits, we the Brothers were invited "to get together in a fraternal spirit to reflect on our vocation and our place in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram.

For us this session was a wonderful experience: it afforded us an opportunity of getting to know each other better and of discovering our roots. It also allowed us to mutually enrich each other, to share in depth and so to revive in ourselves the gift of a religious vocation.

A religious is a person who gives his life to God and to his brothers in a family, in the Church and in the world. It is because there is the gift of self that chastity, obedience and poverty are possible and fruitful, and that the mission derives its meaning.

CHASTITY

Our conviction: To profess the vow of chastity in our world represents a sacrifice, real but necessary, to announce Jesus Christ and to be free and available for all those whom we meet. Life in community lived in brotherly love can help us to be faithful totally to this gift of ourselves to God, and to break down certain solitudes. Because one feels loved one can love in return with a love which is real, gratuitous and universal. In a word: brotherly.

A question: How can the vow and gift of chastity be sign which speaks in our present day society?"

POVERTY

Our conviction: Everything we have is a gift from God. To share it is good news. That is something which helps us to be witnesses of the Gospel and of the choice of consecrated life which we have made.

We are following in the footsteps of Jesus who sets us an example of radical poverty. It also means leading a simple and modest way of life, bearing in mind the life style of the region where we live.

A question: How as a Betharramite can I practice evangelical poverty in community and on the mission?

OBEDIENCE

Our conviction: Obedience is a daily struggle against self, but it is also an act of faith. For us today it also means: "Here I am" in the dialogue we have with our superiors, a dialogue of mutual trust in view of self fulfilment. It means rediscovering our roots – FVD. Here I am, without delay, without reserve, without return – something to be taken seriously. In that way we can reach a consistency and fidelity of life without which happiness is not possible.

A question: Can we really be faithful to our vow of obedience by accepting that the good of the Congregation prevails over personal considerations?"

MISSION

Our conviction: The mission means "offering our sweat to the Lord". Every religious is associated "to the mission of the community. It is a good thing to entrust certain responsibilities to brother-religious, according to their aptitude. In order to maintain a well balanced life every brother receives a religious and professional formation adapted for him. With his superior he keeps an eye on his on-going formation.

Because of his station in life the brother is more attentive to the working class and close to the simple folk. "He must help the community to maintain at the heart of its mission a sense of realities and a care for the poor.

A question: How does the Congregation enhance the value of the presence, witness and mission of the religious-brothers in the world?

Our vocation is worthwhile. It is our choice and we are happy with it.

Whether we are priest or brother our first commitment is to be a religious of Betharram and to be of service to the Gospel according to our talents. Complementarity between religious and human formation should lead us to recognition of identity and to real fraternity within the community and at the exterior.

This international session was the first of its kind. We hope that it will not be the last and that we will meet again in five years time. Don't let this letter lie in the archives! Next time why not have a session with the religious-brothers of Asia?

Betharram, 15th September 2013.



Gustavo Angarola, Sixto Bénitez, Gilbert Napétien Coulibaly, John Dawson, Emile Garat, Patrick Leighton, Theodore Miguel, Andrew Ferris, Claudio Mantegazza, Jean-Pierre Nécol (photographer), Gerard Sutherland, Fiorenzo Trivelli, Severino Urbani, Angelo Sala and their hosts

of Father Austin Hughes

DON'T THEY SAY EVERYWHERE: "ISN'T HE A LUCKY MAN TO BE SO FULL OF SELF-CONFIDENCE! EVERYTHING SEEMS EASIER FOR HIM! WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT THE MAN WHO HAS CONFIDENCE IN HIS GOD? HE IS JUBILANT AND CAN LIFT MOUNTAINS! "TO BELIEVE IS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE" THE SWISS THEOLOGIAN KARL BARTH USED TO SAY.

"Look, he is the God of my salvation: I shall have faith and not be afraid, for Yahweh is my strength and my song, he has been my salvation." (Is 12,2)

"Go ahead! Always be brave, open your heart a little more, have much trust in God, and believe that he will bless you in so far as you trust Him. You are in a wonderful position to do good.

Do what you can in the best way you know, and leave the rest to God as a humble and useless servant, and you will see that all will be well..."

(From a letter to a Superior of the Sisters of the Cross, letter nr. 97)

Narratio... What do these texts say to me?

The Isaiah verse (12.2) is also the text of a popular hymn in English composed by the Benedictine monks of Weston Priory. The monks add the following verse to the refrain (12.3): *I sing of the joy that his love gives to me, and I draw deeply from the springs of his great kindness.* These lines have a part of my prayer and liturgy ever since I was ordained in 1977. They help in times of trial or distress. In the last few months our community at Olton has known some heavy stresses and strains, and verses like these have been a reminder to me of God's loving care.

The lines from St. Michael are a wonderful encouragement to trust, which is something that comes hard when I feel under

threat. The simple line : 'You are in a wonderful position to do good' is a reminder to me of the.. privileges I have been given .. in ministry .. community .. in the church ... among friends etc.... to share God's message of hope and love. What I am finding more and more as I enter the second half of my life, is that God even uses my past mistakes to good purpose. Nothing is wasted! When I and others minister to the many people whose lives have been broken and misspent, it is a sign of hope for them to know that God uses even the debris of our past for his own good purposes and that anything in our past that we think of as a handicap can be used (as it was in the lives of Zacchaeus, Thomas, Levi, etc.) to build bridges of hope for others.