

munity life ... We must also consider that the common people do not make any distinction between a diocesan priest and a religious priest .

What other challenges or mission fields are lying ahead in our Vicariate? In our meetings we often talk about how we can respond to some of the many social needs of the population. Paraguay still has 40% of the population under the poverty line and certainly there are many "new kinds of poverty": landless peasants; homeless people; increasing of

alcohol, drug addictions, and crime etc. We often wonder whether we can give more of our resources , our places , our personnel, to these "existential peripheries". In Ciudad del Este, Father Fulgencio has started an interesting project about the prevention and care of the drug addict people. An association of volunteers, called PAPETRA (Pastoral, prevention, addiction treatment) has been set up. Giving answers to the brothers and sisters in need : this is definitely one of the priorities of our Vicariate in the near future.



*Thus God shall refuse us nothing of what we need. We need three things: divine mercy, divine power, and divine patience: mercy for our forgiveness; power for our salvation; and patience to wait; and God gives everything liberally. Mercy promises forgiveness, power offers us help, and patience gives us time. (M 576)*



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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE  
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA  
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA  
FAMILY NEWS

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***Always ahead !***

“Passion for God’s will, compassion to serve all people”

*God weaves a wonderful tapestry above our heads. Look up, you only see it in reverse, and it throws you into confusion. But when he will show you it from other side, you will see it as it really is and then you will be surprised and filled with admiration to see what your ignorance dared not imagine. (From Pere me voici)*

Dear St Michael,

when you gave this reflection you still were at “this side of eternity”: you saw from below like us a design which seemed confusing, almost without sense; this wonderful tapestry in great confusion. With the image of this wonderful tapestry and the entangled threads, you expressed these great difficulties which you had to face to fulfil the project you had in your heart; at the same time you were showing that your work was not a personal project but indeed the work of God and that in this plan all these threads which seemed mixed up began to form a harmonious design. It was a way of encouraging those who were at your side and sharing in your plan so that they even manage the difficulties and realise the marvellous design as God’s plan taking shape little by little through the very difficulties themselves.

In this jubilee year in which we have celebrated the 150 years of your going to heaven, we have felt encouraged by your vision. We have tried to walk a small step

along the path of your life, to re-read, to deepen, and spread your message, to be able to make our own this vision which accompanied you all your life. Religious, laypeople, schools, colleges, parishes, chaplaincies etc, have participated in many projects realised in the different Vicariates. All had the common desire to perpetuate your message which today is truer than ever.

At the end of this jubilee year I would like to recall and share with the Betharramite religious and laity a few expressions which I have rediscovered this year by reading again your correspondence. These expressions are like threads forming a marvelous tapestry woven by God into our humanity and which help me find and carry out your design in my daily life.

Here are some of your sayings *Corde magno et animo volenti* which appears the least 15 time in your letters. “With an open heart and a great spirit.” As shown in this letter:

14	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Paul Baradat, F. Gilbert Napetien Coulibaly	MAY
	Buon compleanno 20 years of profession	P. Antonio Riva Fr. Tidkham Jailertrit, Fr. Chan Kunu, Fr. Mongkhon Charoentham, Fr. Chanchai Temaroonrung	
	15 years of profession	Fr. Pornchai Sukjai	
	15 years of priesthood	Fr. Britto Rajan	
16	5 años de sacerdocio	Fr. Guido Garcia	
19	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Roberto Amarilla	
20	Feliz cumpleaños 35 years of profession	Hno Sixto Benitez Br. John Dawson	
22	Buon compleanno	P. Gianluca Limonta	
23	Joyeux anniversaire 55 anni di sacerdozio 5 years of priesthood	P. Jean-Marie Ruspil P. Guido Pradella Fr. Charles Enakius	
24	5 years of priesthood	Fr. Stervin Selvadass	
25	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. André Lacaze P. Gerardo Ramos	
26	Buon compleanno	P. Mario Bulanti	
29	Happy birthday	Br Athit Kasetsukchai	
30	Joyeux anniversaire 15 years of profession	P. Bertrand Salla, P. Julio Colina Fr. Charles Enakius, Fr. Stervin Selvadass, Fr. Valan Kanagaraj	
31	Buon compleanno	P. Emilio Manzolini	
3	Bon anniversaire	P. Joseph Mazerolles	JUNE
6	Happy birthday	Fr Subesh Odiyathingal	
9	60 años de sacerdocio 30 años de sacerdocio	P. Luis Oteiza P. Pietro Villa	
10	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Crispin Villalba	
12	Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. Angelo Bianchi Fr Anton Madej	





ous pastoral services. This ensures that a large number of laity are formed and collaborate closely with the priests. The parish priest, regularly visiting each community, can have a close contact with all families of the parish over a vast area. Usually a good number of laity respond with enthusiasm and vibrancy. This partially can explain why the Church

has helped to significantly improve the spiritual support given to their children: the field is open, the soil is rich, we need farmers having the same Heart of Christ.

Another important mission entrusted to us by the Church is the parish ministry. In recent years, the religious, for several weeks, were going to the interior of the country to carry out the mission or to help neighbouring parishes where pastoral care was inadequate. Gradually, at the bishops request, we have begun to assume the pastoral care of parishes. As I said, we take care of three rural areas and two urban districts with more than 3 churches.

The pastoral work in the parishes is very important for several reasons. Usually, each parish is divided into sub-stations or communities, and each one has its own structure with catechesis and vari-

ous pastoral services. This ensures that a large number of laity are formed and collaborate closely with the priests. The parish priest, regularly visiting each community, can have a close contact with all families of the parish over a vast area. Usually a good number of laity respond with enthusiasm and vibrancy. This partially can explain why the Church

in our country is considered as the organization with the greatest social and moral influence. The largest number of candidates to the priesthood and religious life come from the parishes. This can be considered a further blessing: there is a good number of vocations, both men and women. A good vocation ptomotoin always gives a lot of fruits. The difficulty lies in giving a proper personal formation to each candidate and make them able to persevere in carrying the responsibilities they have assumed.

Is there a future for this type of ministry? Yes, there is, certainly. The bishops will continue to ask; there are still many underprivileged areas, both rural and suburban areas. The risk, always hidden, is that the religious does not distinguishes himself from the diocesan priest, especially when he fails to establish a com-

*Do not forget to say to God and your Superiors through your conduct; 'Here I am ...without delay, yet without undue haste; without ifs and buts, but without being rash; without any looking back, yet being*

*willing to change; Corde magno et animo volenti with peace and joy. (Letter 39)*

You make use of the same expression when you write to the superior of Moncade: *When one's ideas are opposed, it is difficult to accept. Then one believes that one is losing time when things are not going according to the inventions of our own imaginings. One does not know how to understand, appreciate, and embrace the disposition; corde magno et animo volenti et constanti: obscurity, sterility and lack of success are what one sees oneself reduced to, by obedience. This is the manna unfortunately hidden from many. (Letter 163)*

You use this same expression in letter 343 when asking a religious to be faithful and encouraging a missionary in South America (letter 418). By repeating this expression you remind me that faithfulness comes from the heart and is transmitted to the will; the generosity and promptitude of those who answer the call of the Lord purifies the heart and permits us to see the hidden manna within the difficulties



or the steps that I need to take each day: this reminds me of Pope Francis' words that "a religious with a bitter heart does not belong to his people. We must never become pure administrators, mana-

gers but fathers, brothers, companions on the journey." Such generosity and promptitude will cure a sour heart and bring peace and goodwill. I am certain that you, Michael, would have enthusiastically approved the words of Pope Francis.

"Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re." With a mixture of firmness and gentleness: another expression which comes to my attention. These words are taken from the book of Wisdom (Wisdom 8, 1). In your letters this expression appears at least six times. You use it when giving counsel to superiors especially in dealing with difficult situations. For example concerning the young man with difficulties entering the seminary against the wishes of his parents and you suggest to father Etchecopar... *that by following his vocation he will be doing the will of God and will have all the advantages which go with that vocation. Should not a mother understand that, before all else she should seek the happiness of her child?*

[...] *People never work better to secure their*

*parent's happiness than when they are following their vocations. No doubt they fail to see this clearly; but is it not true? Go to the point suaviter in modo, sed fortiter in re. (Letter 146)*

This expression conveys your determination to follow the will of God and at the same time showing gentleness to people. It is a balance which is not always easy to find, but always characterised your decisions, in very complex and difficult situations.

On another occasion you advise the superior of the College of Moncade to do all that is possible... *to steer the ship above and below, suaviter prudentque certainly, but also fortiter. I am afraid that some imagined impossibilities are paralysing you. Some movement is needed there, some action from a solid push. (Letter 225)*

We are here in a particular situation, in a different situation, but you remind us again that firmness and prudence must always work together to achieve an objective. You invite the same person to adopt an even-handed way of acting, which is to say; *we have a duty before God and men, of not failing to correct and form men who are idoneos, expeditos et expositos. Begin by standing by the rules yourself, and then suaviter as much as possible, but fortiter, and go ahead! with both teachers and pupils,... (Letter 251)*

Not only a generous heart and determination is necessary, but also gentleness and firmness.

There is a third saying, drawn from Scripture which strikes me in your letters. I find

it very appropriate for it echoes within me an invitation to never lose that richness and life which is a gift of the Holy Spirit in this jubilee year, an invitation to constancy and perseverance: *insta opportune et importune (2Tim4,2) be vigilant in favourable and unfavourable times ; words St Paul addresses to Timothy. You use this expression when inviting the superior of the seminary at Oloron to do what ever he could... always and everywhere, in preaching and in strongly urging, in season and out of season, this discretion and all our rules, but notably those without which our Society would not be able to survive except by a miracle. (Lettre 154)*

On another occasion this expression appears to be a call for unity:

*May all our members be one: unum sint. Insta in hoc opportune et importune. (letters 340 and 570)*

Dear St Michael, the jubilee year is ending but your Charism which you received from the Holy Spirit continues to be alive among your sons, laypeople and religious, which day after day by their mission wherever they find themselves, contributing to shape this design which remains not always clear to us but which you from on high, see in all its fullness. By your writings, your example, your intercession, inspire us and guide us. " *May the Lord put in our hearts the same passion to do his will and the same compassion to serve all people in the heart of this world where he sends us".*

Enrico Frigerio, scj  
General Vicar

good health, we have a good academic level, a qualified teaching staff and adequately open to the betharramite spirituality; the boarding schools are self-supporting and have important guarantee funds. The vocation to priesthood of some of our young priests was born in our boarding schools. The Church is asking us not to leave such a fruitful field of apostolate.

In these recent years we have found great help in our Superior General who stressed the importance of the spirituality of Saint Michael Garicoits to be given to education in our institutions. Our boarding schools are going to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Saint Michael on May 12th in the majestic stadium Leon Coundou, organised by the Colegio San José in Asunción. There will be a parade along Avenida España, followed by a solemn Mass; about 3,000 people are expected to turn out: students, teaching and non-teaching staff of the five institutions.

What does the future has in store for us in the field of education? According to a recent survey, Paraguay is the youngest country in South America, with 70% of the population under the age of 30; we can assume that there will still be the opportunity to exercise the ministry in the boarding schools for a long time.

Public schools fail to meet such a need for study and training , and this will certainly increase the demand in the private boarding schools ... the ability to occupy this space it certainly depends on a Church open to the signs of the times ... from our side we see the need that many young religious be trained to take on this mission, which continues to be challenging, perhaps even more than 110 years ago: the youth of our country are losing their faith, said Bishop Bogarín. We can share his view today , by seeing how alcoholism, drug addiction and juvenile delinquency are rampant ... For quite some time now , the Congregation has been asking us to concentrate our efforts both on the accompaniment and pastoral care of the educational community, leaving the academic and administrative direction to the laity. This decision has certainly strengthened the cooperation between the religious and the laity. Parents also recognize that this decision





The Betharram of Paraguay has certainly been blessed. We celebrated the 110th anniversary of that "Here I am!" uttered by the Fathers Sampay and Lhoste, the first two Betharramites that on February 21, 1904 settled in the Guaraní land. About 5 years before, Bishop Bogarín, definitely one of the most prestigious Bishops ever of the Church of Paraguay, during his *ad limina* visit had submitted a worrying request to His Holiness Leo XIII: he asked the permission to open a Catholic boarding school in the Paraguay land, because, he argued, the youth of his country were losing their faith. The Will of God wanted the Betharramite religious to take up this great challenge, despite a shortage of staff and in a very difficult time for France... the years of exile.

Today, looking at the vast field of apostolate that we are asked to take care of, perhaps we should say that we are too few for such a plentiful harvest. We are 19 religious: some with poor health, others are in advanced age; we are trying to carry out the mission entrusted to us in 5 major boarding schools (with about 6000 students) and in 5 parishes; three of them are located in rural areas and two in urban areas, all with a significant and demanding pastoral activity; we also have a house of formation.

This is the main source of our blessings, today just like 110 years ago: our main



responsibility is to repeat the Ecce Venio with the same dynamism as the Incarnate Word, for the rest the Lord of the harvest will provide ... and, of course, we are called to pray and do vocation promotion to attract more workers into this beautiful vineyard.

The educational mission was and still is the main ministry entrusted to us by the congregation and by the Church. The work in our boarding schools is very much appreciated by the society, both because along many years important people have been formed and because of the style of education we are giving: to form a good Catholic and a good servant of the motherland.

This seems to be the reason why our works are still flourishing even in difficult times, when several other private boarding schools have been closed down or have seen the number of their pupils drastically dwindling. We are enjoying

## International Communities

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THIS JUBILEE YEAR? PERHAPS THE ORIGINAL PROJECT OF SAINT MICHAEL WHO WANTED FOR HIMSELF AND FOR THE RISING CONGREGATION, A "FLYING CAMP" NOT COMMITTED TO "KEEP THE POSITIONS", BUT READY TO ADJUST ITSELF IN ORDER "TO RESPOND TO THE VARIOUS CALLS OF MEN WHEN THE POPE AND THE BISHOPS, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR MISSION, MAKE THEM KNOWN TO US" (RoL 17). THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES ARE A STEP IN THIS DIRECTION.

IN THE SAME WAY EACH REGION, EACH VICARIATE AND EACH COMMUNITY ARE "CONSTITUTIONALLY" CALLED TO AN ONGOING DISCERNMENT (RdV 18). THESE ARE THE FRUITS GIVEN BY THE JUBILEE YEAR WE ARE GOING TO CLOSE ON MAY 14TH.

The General Chapter of Bethlehem 2011 called for the establishment of international communities. This is to show the missionary spirit that should characterise us as much at inter-regional level as at regional level. I must say, with great joy, that whenever I proposed to a young religious that he leave his country, his Vicariate or Region, like Abraham, to live and perform his mission in another culture, the answer has been positive.

At the request of the Chapter, I sought the

cooperation of Fathers Stervin (India) and Pornchai (Thailand) for the community of Pau and deacon Davi (Brazil) for that of Mendelu. For the moment, because of political, social and ecclesial reasons experienced by our communities of the Holy Land, nothing has yet been done for the community of Nazareth.

However, there are already many international communities in the Regions. For example that of Olton in the Region of the Blessed Miriam with the presence of



Father Wilfred (India), Fr. Vincent (India) in Droitwich, Fr Mongkhon (Thailand) in Great Barr. The last two have been given the responsibility of being parish priests and the first (Fr.Wilfred) we asked to serve as Regional Vicar for the Vicariate. There are several issues in this situation. The Vicariate of England is reaping the rewards of its extensive collaboration in supporting the emerging presence of Betharram in India.

The England vicariate, rather overstretched due to pastoral commitments has now re-organised, leaving Whitnash behind, but maintaining our presence in Droitwich (which it had considered leaving). The latter indeed, is of great significance from a missionary point of view, since we are the owners, and it contains the cemetery of the Vicariate. Religious exchanges between India and Thailand are also planned.

It is a similar picture in the Saint Michael Region. And communities of the Holy Land have always been international. Those in France are now international too: in addition to that of Pau, there are religious of the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire in Pibrac (Fr. Emmanuel), in Anglet (Fr. Arsène) and in Bétharram (Fr. Francis). Again, the collaboration of this Vicariate is a way to thank France for its commitment in personnel and financial resources from the beginnings of Bétharram in this African country. Two other religious of Côte d'Ivoire, Fr. Marius and Bro. Gilbert also work with great dedication in the St. Michael community in Bouar Central Africa. Deacon Martial Menqué, originally from Central African Repu-

blic, meanwhile, is working in the community of Montemurlo (Italy).

In the Father Etchecopar Region, there were many exchanges of religious during the periods of formation between the three Vicariates. This facilitated the founding of the missionary community of Montevideo-Tacuarembó with Fr. Gavel of Uruguay Fr.Recalcati of Italy, Bro. Victor from Paraguay and Deacon Wagner from Brazil. Thus we continue our 100-year presence at the level of school and parish in Montevideo and develop a missionary project. We note the positive response of this region, despite its poverty, in strengthening the community of Mendelu (Spain), with the availability and obedience of Deacon Davi Lara.

Such an international project is a real challenge because of language, cultural differences and pastoral training, not counting those interpersonal relationships which are always there even in the same country, and increase with cultural differences. They are a constant; the Betharramite missionaries have met them in all times and in all countries. It is not possible to realise such a project with a magic wand. Only the strength of our desire and our belief that this is the right way make it possible. Great and holy things always start so humbly, apparently without a future (DS 183-184), but grow with patience and dedication. For the religious who devote themselves, it means a lot of renunciation of their ideas, projects and personal aspirations to focus on the essence of their life and their consecration: the experience of the love of God

## The Vicariate of Paraguay

### its roots



The Betharramite presence in Paraguay was certainly favored by the expulsion of religious from France. Some of them reached Paraguay. They offered their fully availability to start a new work; but it is mainly the result of the tireless will of the bishop of Asuncion, Monsignor Symphorian Bogarin, determined to establish a Catholic college, the first in his country. The choice fell on the fathers of Buenos Aires who came from Bayonne (France). After many vicissitudes, the Colegio San José was opened on July 1st 1904 with 15 students. The first community was made up of 5 Fathers: Jean-Baptiste Tounédou, Charles Sampay, Jean Lhoste, Alfred Bacqué and André Lousteau.

For a long time the San José boarding school was the only Betharramite work in Paraguay. Brilliant professors of this institution gave a considerable boost to the cultural development of the country. We can name, among many others, the fathers Eugène Surbielle and Pierre Chenu, who were superiors; father Lucien Cestac, both apostle of the devotion of the Sacred Heart and of the Apostolate of Prayer; father Joseph Saubatte, known as Pai Saba, for a long time Parish Priest of San José, founder of the San Miguel Garicoits parish school; father Miguel Rigual, who founded the minor seminary of the Congregation in Paraguay in 1951, known to all as Colégio Apostólico; father César Alonso de las Heras, a learned and versatile religious, who wrote the history of the San José college.

In 1933 the college chapel was established as a parish church; in 1977 a new community was opened just outside the capital city, in a place called Ciudad del Este, where the Congregation was first entrusted with a parish and starting from 1979 with a new boarding school. Since 1947 the works of Paraguay have always been part of the Province of Rio de la Plata, along with Argentina and Uruguay; in 1977 Betharram in Paraguay became a provincial delegation and in 1983 the vice province of Paraguay was established and it acquired its full autonomy. This encouraged the development of the works, in a special way those engaged in education; the formation houses for the novices and the scholastics were founded at Puente Remanso and at Lambaré. At the same time new Betharramite parishes at San Joaquin and at La Colmena were created.

The Congregation in Paraguay gave two bishops to the Church: Mons Claudio Silvero Acosta, Bishop of Coronel Oviedo and current Auxiliary Bishop of Encarnación; and Mons Ignacio Gogorza Izaguirre, Bishop of Coronel Oviedo, Ciudad del Este and current bishop of Encarnación.

In the new structure given to the congregation, the Vicariate of Paraguay, along with Brazil and Argentina-Uruguay, is part of the Region Father Augusto Etchecopar.

Roberto Cornara



consolation made me understand that this failure didn't define my life, that I was not responsible for their departure, these young people were free and I could not stay 'frozen' either. Always forward! And Jesus continued to keep me going this way. Again in obedience, I became Provincial. I lived through the *corralito* of 2001 and the problems of St. Joseph's College. I then survived a deep nervous depression when my only prayer was: «For the honour of thy name, O Lord, heal me; In your mercy, deliver me from distress» (Ps. 143, 11), together with these words: Mary, comforter of the afflicted, pray for us. From this also the Lord has freed me, putting me in the hands of a wise psychiatrist. Beautiful are thy works, Lord, how deep are your thoughts! With all that I went through, like a game of chess, I never imagined that my brothers would have the courage to elect me as Superior General at the Chapter of 2005. I trembled at the prospect, because of everything that had happened, but I could not refuse because of Him who has given me so much, showing me so much love. So I said «yes» praying with the words of St. Michael: «Who am I? (Ex 3.11). I acknowledge and confess my nothingness, my disability and my sinfulness. Yet here I am, without delay, without reserve and without return! Forward! I know your heart and you know mine, Lord. You know I love you and that's enough! Here I am! I can do anything because I am nothing. I'm just a feeble man in everything. Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name give glory. «(DS 44-45) And the Lord gave me the wild ox's strength, he anointed me with fresh oil, and consoled me with the

wine of joy in the midst of all that he required of me. The humiliations, through which I had to pass, configured me to Him. «You put in my heart more joy than all their harvests» (Ps 4, 8). And he sent me to be the direct witness of its action in the lives of my brothers in the heart which he shows his love and his face like a ceaseless fermentation.

That is why I am happy and live my vocation without standing still, but always going before my brothers. I'm an elected official, a privileged child that the Lord spoils. I never thought of being anything other than who I am and that makes me happy in my vocation as a religious priest. That is why I can only bless the Lord for the good he has done and I am happy in the midst of all the difficulties which sometimes life is.

«O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; it is you yourself who are my prize. The lot marked out for me my delight! Welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!» (Ps 16. 5-6).

Footnotes:

1. Father Francisco Daleoso, nicknamed Paco, and the late Daniel P. Martin, who died last year.

2. Fr Gaspar was a member at the time of the Province of Rio de la Plata.

3. *Corralito* is the term used to refer to the Argentine economic crisis, the restrictions imposed by the government in December 2001 on cash withdrawals in cash in bank accounts and savings banks.



International community of Pau with two sisters of the Apostolic Carmel

manifested in Jesus Christ, who fills us with joy and impels us to provide others the same happiness, and make Jesus known. This is a real «theological space» where religious deepen their vocation, ministry and mission.

This project of international community will give a new face to the Congregation; already we are passing from a mono-cultural to a multicultural dimension. For a long time the communities of Latin America, the Holy Land and Thailand preserved a French lifestyle and this was normal and good: most of the religious who began these communities were French or French-trained. No one can deny who he is personally and culturally. From this identity, he does good, practices love and accomplishes the mission by adapting as best as possible.

Today we must accept that we are living

in different reality: in most Vicariates, religious originated in that country and live according to the local lifestyle. When I ask young people to integrate into a religious community in countries where our presence is well established, they come alone, formed by their culture; they then have to adapt both to communities and missions that are formed by a tradition, by the crisis of secularisation, and live a style of ecclesial living in the heart of a highly secular society. It is not easy but

not necessarily impossible.

We all need to encourage one another along this path, warmly welcoming those religious who have responded generously to this missionary commitment. Thus the international communities give a new face to our family. They are a fruit of the Jubilee celebration of the 150th anniversary of the death of our Holy Father Michael Garicoïts. It is to him that we must commend the project so as to make it a response to the renewal of the Congregation requested by the Pope Francis in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* for the urgent demands of mission and for the happiness of all our Betharramite brothers.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, sc  
Superior General



### Congregation

**International Session** ► Since April 24th, 10 young religious have been attending the 40-day-long session in preparation for their perpetual profession at Betharram. They come from the 3 Regions: Br Kissi Ayo Jean-Paul and Br Worou Dimon Vincent (Vic. of Ivory Coast); Br Fernandez da Silva Eudes, Br Da Silva Glecimar Guilherme, Br Da Silva Lara Davi Aparecido (Vic. of Brazil); Br Martínez Torales Victor Manuel, Br Villalba Mailin Raul (Vic. of Paraguay); Br Siluvai Antony, Br Michael Bistis T. Fernando, Br Jacob Biso Puliam-pally (Vic. of India). They are accompanied by Fr Laurent Bacho, Fr Mauro Ulrich de Oliveira, and Fr Stervin Selvadass.

From April 27 to May 1 they all went to Ibarre. Each religious could experience in a very meaningful way the simplicity, poverty and unassuming lifestyle of the Saint of the "Here I am"!



Lourdes, walk through the forest, then visit of Bétharram. All the pilgrims enjoyed this time of renewal and sharing and were invited to say again their "Here I am".

To celebrate the jubilee, the scj laity of Limoges organized a series of meetings to make the Saint of Betharram better known to the public. Both religious and lay people from Pibrac and Pau joined these meetings, slides presentations and prayer sessions. All enjoyed these significant moments of spirituality and conviviality!

**Always ahead!** ► March 29th, the 4th meeting of the young religious present in the Region was held in Pau: Frs Arsène Noba, Emmanuel Congo, François Tohonon, Gabriel Pornchai Sukjai, Gérard Zugarramurdi, Simone Panzeri, Stervin Selvadass and the deacon Davi Lara, accompanied by Fr. Guy Le Putre sj, spent a day reflecting upon the theme of spiritual formation.

### Italy

« **BetharrAmici** » ►

On 4-6 April, at Forno (Parma) the young Betharramite lay association «BetharrAmici» gathered for 3 days of reflection and prayer. The topic was: «Peter, who actually are you?» On 25-27 April, in the scj community in Rome, they held another meeting in the spirit of St Michael Garicoits: prayer sessions, reflection, evangelisation in the "Piazza del Popolo". On Sunday they attended the Mass in St Peter's square for the canonisation of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II.



return to the lay state even though I myself had decided to continue my vocational journey. It was an experience of great awe along with freedom, of trust also in Him who called me, not knowing quite where it would take me. The pilgrimage was not interrupted: Toulouse, Zaragoza and Buenos Aires where, finally, in 1980, I made perpetual vows and was ordained deacon and then priest. I felt great joy in making that final decision. «for I know in whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is capable of taking care of all I have entrusted to him until that day.» (2 Tim. 1:12) These are the words that I placed on the ordination card and that reflected what I lived then. The early years of my ministry were devoted to catechesis and pastoral care at St. Joseph's College during the week. Sunday afternoon I went to the parish of Barracas for confessions, to celebrate the Eucharist and accompany a group of young people. I never imagined myself as a pastor for youth. And it opened me undeniably a huge pastoral field. The young questioned us about our originality because they saw many other young people involved in the spirituality of other congregations. From this was born «Betharramite Youth» which led us more deeply into the writings of St. Michael Garicoits to discover our uniqueness. And the Lord gave me the grace to experience the spirituality and mission of Betharram, the charism of the congregation. How many activities! How many night vigils to prepare things! How many meetings and friendships! How much dedication! Which path of growth! In addition, I discovered how St. Michael Garicoits with

his way of living the Gospel, made clear what I wanted to be and what I was. «How can I repay the Lord for all he has done to me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord!» (Ps. 114-115, 12-13). With boldness under obedience I took charge of formation, which both attracted and unnerved me. But every time I obeyed, I was enriched by the opening up of new possibilities, commitment, new growth requirements. I never considered myself suited for such a task for which I had no preparation. I had to start by reading around and seeking advice.

Thus, with Paco, we went to meet Father Bergoglio, SJ. I remember the month of February 1986, when we worked with Martin on the formation project of the Province, under the linden tree of the Adrogué residence. Then putting it into practice, we devised benchmarks such as «1001 questions» to quote one of my postulants. In this adventure, I remember moments of disappointment, upset stomach that had me face the attitudes of adolescent rebellion, and the Provincial Retreat of 1996. During this retreat, the consoling spiritual light illuminated me and made me understand, accept the sense of failure and shame I felt because of the two novices who had left after the month of Spiritual Exercises. I remember ... It was in the chapel of Villa Betharram on the last bench on the left, I was sitting by the aisle, gazing at the window of the altar. I meditated on the words of the Manifesto: 'Jesus remained in the state of victim, without ever doing anything himself, always animated by the spirit of God.' This

### Region



#### France-Spain

**150<sup>th</sup> anniversary** ► On April 5-6, Frs Emmanuel Congo and Jean-Marie Ruspil led a group of parishioners of Pibrac on a pilgrimage to Betharram. Departure from the Grotto of





Little church of Palacios de la Valduerna,  
birthplace of Fr. Gaspar (Spain)

much from curiosity as to join in the procession by kneeling down, hands clasped. And the desire grew, as a choirboy, as a volunteer available for all church related business. I loved being in the church, to the point that I forgot to go home. Manifesting such dispositions, when I reached the age of 11, I was the obvious candidate for the parish priest to present to a father of Bétharram so this brought me to the apostolate of Mendelu. The priest, knowing the poverty of my family knew that I could not go to secondary school without the aid of such religious. How grateful I am to my parents who made such sacrifices for me to go far away from home, as they said; what gratitude also to the congregation! This echoes a feature of Abraham's calling: «The Lord said, Go ! Leave your country and your father's house and go to the land I will show you'» (Gen. 12: 1) . So I left my family at the age of 11 to go to Mendelu where I spent six beautiful years. Then I left my country to join the novitiate in Bel Sito, France, where I lived during the famous period of May 1968.

Leaving the novitiate, I returned to Zaragoza for two years of philosophy. From that period, the request to leave my land was marked by a journey punctuated by post-conciliar crises: Mendelu, Zaragoza ... still in Betharramite community, but without having made vows, a student of Philosophy then of literature. Amidst all this, the attraction for the Lord never diminished; the time came to act on it. I carried it deep within me, and could not resist it. I remember talking during this last night with a fellow student who had asked to

difficult experiences. So my life has been illuminated as a history of salvation. I deeply identify with these words of Jeremiah: «Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; since before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer 1. 4-8). Even before the age of reason, I felt attracted by the signs of the Mystery: the Cross, a procession, a celebration, a bell, a priest, a charitable work ... The collective memory of my family (different people have also told me) tell this story of when I was two years old: there has been a popular mission in the village. It was time to pray the rosary at dawn. Occupied with the affairs of the house, my mother could not attend. Hearing the songs, I went to the door, not so

## Ivory Coast

**150<sup>th</sup> anniversary** ► After the Easter celebrations, the religious of the vicariate went to Dabakala to take part in a three-day-long Assembly. From April 25 to 27 it was the turn of the Betharramite laity: they gathered at Yamoussoukro for a few days of reflection. The theme of the meeting was «Let our faith be visible in our personal life and in the Church.» The resource person was Mr. Olivier Aka.

## Region



## Argentina-Uruguay

**The Holy Easter for the youngest** ► On Holy Monday, April 14, the teachers of St. Joseph's of Buenos Aires explained to the children of the Primary School how delightful it is to live as brothers and to share the meal! On Holy Tuesday, in the chapel of the college, the rite of the "sharing the bread of Jesus" was celebrated. It is a special bread because, whoever eats it, will have Jesus as a guest in his heart. Then the children put their hands on the heart to feel his presence. On Wednesday, in the classroom, the children drew a picture showing how they lived the previous days. These children could grasp so easily the mystery of the Lord's presence in their life, feel him deeply and bear witness. The children bring us closer to God ...

**Adrogué** ► March 30, 110 people including children and grandparents held their first lay meeting of the year, accompanied by Frs Giancarlo, Guido and Paco. Despite the bad weather, they enjoyed a nice family atmosphere

with prayers, talks, walking, witnesses, games and daily celebrations of the Holy Mass. Gabriela



writes: "I thank God for being part of the Betharram family. I really experience every day that we are one family walking together on a journey of life and faith and that religious and lay people are enriching each other. Betharram is a bridge leading us from the Heart of Jesus to the hearts of all. Here I am!"

## Region



## India

**New scj priests** ► The Deacons George, Rojo, Yesudas and Jesuraj were ordained priests respectively on April 29, on May 3, 8 and 10. On their invitation card they chose these words of St Michael Garicoits : "Jesus Christ is our mirror, our example that we must never lose sight of; His life, His actions, His interior and exterior way of life. Let us compare ourselves continually with Him; He alone is my life". Best wishes to them all!

## Thailand

**Huaytong** ► From March 30 to April 8 in the Huaytong Parish was held the annual Catechesis Camp for 140 children hailing from different villages around the Mission Centre. At the end of the camp 15 children were baptized.

Decisions of the Superior General and his Council

- The Superior General formally created the General Fund for formation as requested by the General Chapter 2011 (nr. 57). The General Fund for Formation comes from the need of meeting the short-term, extraordinary economic requests related to formation, in certain parts of the congregation. The fund will be supplied by a contribution from the General Council; contributions from the different realities of the Congregation (works, communities, vicariates, regions); funds collected by the activities of missionary promotion; donations given by the benefactors towards formation. (Extract from the letter to the Regional Superiors & Vicars on April 14th)
- By virtue of article 198 of the Rule of Life, the Superior General exempted the Regional Superior of the Region Saint Michael Garicoits from the obligation of gathering a regional chapter, considering the arguments put forward by the Regional Superior as well as the road map proposed to fulfil the objectives of the regional chapter in a different way.
- The correspondence of St. Michael Garicoits on the web!  
Rome May 14 - Today the Jubilee Year in honor of St. Michael Garicoits comes to an end. This has been a year full of events lived intensely by all the Regions and all the Vicariates of the Congregation. Now, at the end of this year, we would like the spiritual heritage of St. Michael Garicoits to be accessible to all: first of all to us, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram, because we always feel the need to return to the sources of our spirituality; then to the young people in formation, so that they can have access directly to the writings of St. Michael and, so to speak, "to be formed" directly by him; to the Betharramite laity, so that St. Michael could become a source of inspiration and advice in all the events and choices of their day to day life; and finally to those who, just out of curiosity, come in touch for the first time with this spiritual heritage: they may be helped, by the depth of thought and intense relationship with God of St. Michael, to rediscover the beauty and the joy of believing in the Lord Jesus and in his Church.  
For all these reasons, from today (and on the first day of each month, except in August) the "Correspondence" will be published on the website.  
Very special thanks to the translators who have made this initiative possible and this spiritual heritage accessible to a wider audience: for the translation into Spanish thanks to the late Fr Miguel Martinez SCJ and Fr Angelo Recalcati SCJ; for the Italian translation many thanks to Mr. Mario Grugnola; and for the English translation many thanks to Fr Dominic Innamorati SCJ.  
Enjoy your reading!

Our departed

On April 11, Sister Catherine Montgomery, of the Congregation of St. Joseph of Lyon, passed away. Sister Catherine was one the "Companions of Betharram", the Betharramite lay Associates of the Vicariate of England. Let us pray for the repose of her soul.

On April, 27, Mrs Margaret Warents, 70 years old, sister of Fr Austin, the Regional Superior of the Blessed Miriam Region, died in Newcastle upon Tyne, North East of England. We express our sympathy to Fr Austin and his family and we promise to keep them in our prayers.

of Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

IT IS ON THE THEME OF VOCATION AND WITH THE NARRATIO OF FR. GASPAR THAT WE CONCLUDE THIS SERIES THAT BEGAN EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO. WE WANTED THROUGHOUT THE JUBILEE YEAR, TO HEAR THE JOURNEY AND THE FAITH STORY OF SOME BETHARRAMITE RELIGIOUS SELECTED FROM DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, CULTURES AND NATIONALITIES... AND WE WANTED TO GIVE WEIGHT TO THE NARRATIO FIDEI METHOD, WHICH AS WE HAVE SEEN, IS SIMPLY TO LET THE HEART TELL THE STORY OF OUR LIFE AND JOURNEY OF FAITH. WITH A LITTLE BOLDNESS, WE WANTED TO LET ST. MICHAEL SPEAK TOO. WE DID IT WITH RESPECT AND LOVE DRAWING ON HIS CORRESPONDENCE, AND WITH THE CONVICTION THAT IF THE LORD FILLS OUR LIVES, WE ALSO LIKE ST. MICHEL WE CAN BE THE SEEDS OF RENEWAL IN THE WORLD...

You have seduced me and I let myself be seduced (Jer. 20, 7-9)

SILENCE

The Spiritual exercises I experienced in 1987 constituted a fundamental moment of my experience of faith and the path of my vocation. Along with Paco and Martin<sup>1</sup>, we even decided to integrate them with the formation project. It was therefore important that we ask of young what people we have experienced for ourselves and that we are able to be more self-aware in the dialogue of formation<sup>2</sup>. The month living with the exercises helped me to enjoy the experience of a loving God. I came to realize how certain ideas, attitudes, actions or certain criteria of this world had captured my heart without my realizing it ; seemingly, everything was fine for me externally, on both liturgical pastoral levels , in prayer and in commu-

nity life. What an illusion! And I saw myself unable to exit this situation, until facing the question: «Lord, I will go back to the beginning. What must I do?» That is when the consoling response came: «Repent! Do not put your trust in yourself but me; because nothing is impossible for me, then come, follow me! « From consolation came the strength to continue to pursue my way with Jesus, passionate about him and participating in his mission to please his Father in the service of men. This experience has also made me rediscover and better appreciate all previous experiences through which God was present in my life. Sometimes I had come to doubt the goodness of such "normality"; it seemed so much more spectacular to convert after