

*Listening to
Saint Michael...*

Ut mors fortis est dilectio.
"Love strong as death". Any virtue which has not love as its foundation is open to the attacks of the enemy; at the time of danger, fear or any other reason is not strong enough to resist; there is only charity which resists every attack; there is only love which is strong as death.

(Cachica Notebook nr. 62)

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Merry Christmas!
Wollen Christwars!

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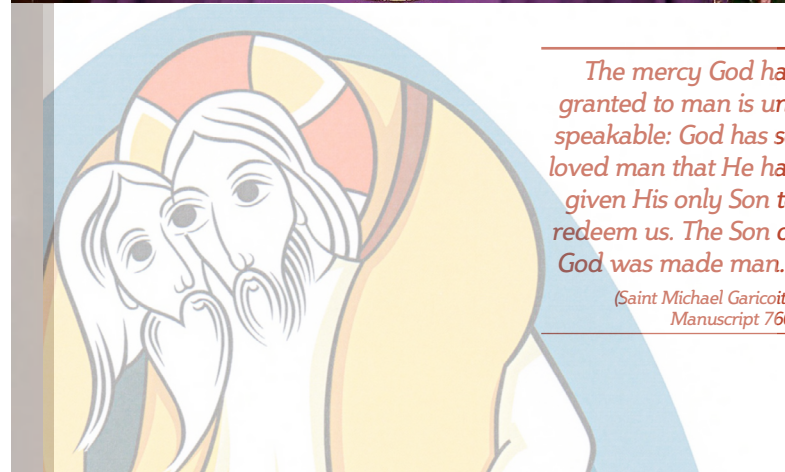
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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA
FAMILY NEWS

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

113rd year
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The mercy God has granted to man is unspeakable: God has so loved man that He has given His only Son to redeem us. The Son of God was made man...

*(Saint Michael Garicoits,
Manuscript 760)*



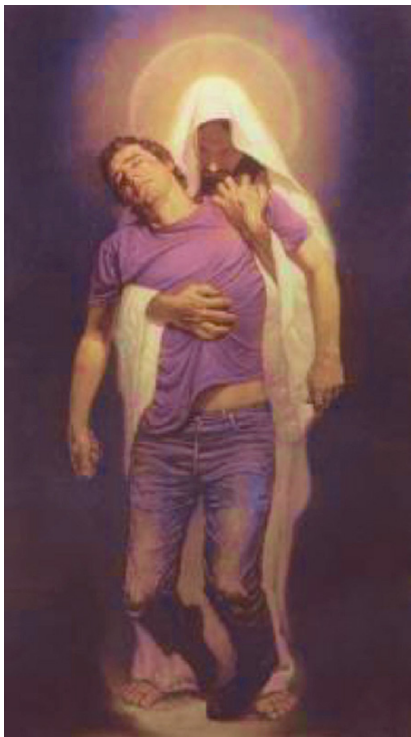
Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

110
2015

The mercy of the heart of Jesus

Pope Francis in the Cathedral of Bangui and in St Peter's Basilica in Rome and all the Bishops in their respective dioceses, have ushered in the Jubilee Year of Mercy by opening the Holy Door. Everyone can meet the person of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, who died for us and rose again. In Him everyone can discover the merciful face of the Father and experience the tenderness of an undeserved Love. The message and witness of St Michael Garicoits can, throughout the coming year accompany our experience of mercy. This is how he expresses it:

Admirable advance of divine providence. When the natural law, that It has engraved in our hearts was obliterated, it expressed it on tables of stone... God gives a king to His people who no longer want His immediate rule: He adapts Himself, accommodates Himself to the weakness of His creature; He follows it so to speak in its sinfulness, and there, presents it with the aids of salvation that it can still clasp, to save it. This is seen above all when God like a mother making her-



self small on a level with her child, seeing the heart of man, man himself, become flesh, comes down to our wretched flesh, is made flesh like him, to raise man up to God: the word was made flesh. (Spiritual Master)

This quotation from St Michael states very well what mercy really is: to touch the wretchedness of the other with one's heart, stoop over, humiliation, to kneel before the one who is in the depths of his misery, threatened in his humanity so as to restate him, to redeem him and restore him in his dignity. The movement emanates

from the Heart of God soiled by contact with us and runs the risk of contamination by the misery which degrades man's heart (a heart which has become incarnate, the mud of our flesh). From this point of view the mystery of the Incarnation is a mystery of mercy.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ, Son of God, humbled himself, not regarding equality with God as a privilege; he became man like one of us; he knelt down to wash the feet of his disciples; he cast out wicked spirits, he cured the sick, he forgave sin and consoled

from Coarraze, students of the Major Seminary, and opened the door of the novitiate to them. Mr Perguilhem, nephew of Mr Perguilhem Senior, a pupil of Betharram, listened to her voice. Mr Claverie from Sarrance, pupil of Oloron, the two Barrère brothers, Mr Abos from Escuri, Mr Bignalet from Coarraze, Mr Cazaban (nephew of our late colleague) all heard her voice too and they said "Here we are". Their faithfulness had already responded to the call and resounded in the hearts of 4 or 5 pupils who intended to present themselves in the same year 1872. These unexpected and enduring recruits, born of the compassionate tenderness of Our Lady allowed within 2 or 3 years to 6 or 7 priests to leave the (teaching) profession and strengthen the body of missionaries. Since the foundation of the Congregation in 1841, Our Lady wanted almost everyone who worked for her to get ready for her works and make a foundation of virtue through the suffering of the (teaching) profession.

As the number of confessors rose in the Chapel where each day the daily attendance grew. Invalids, those in despair, those abandoned, those suffering immense loss or terrible internal sorrow have arrived, as it were, in Betharram every day since 1860 and the number will always rise. These people come to claim the prayers of the Church, they come to give thanks for the healing or consolation received, many devote themselves to the Virgin with their family, others come to make offerings: money, silver gilt, bouquets, altar pieces. Any marriages to bless (and anything that presented a difficulty to the priests) were sent to Betharram. With their authorisation, we widely used the powers given to us, saving the



poor the expenditure they could barely afford, cutting short disturbances while strengthening the parishioners respect for their Pastors.

One evening – or who knows, perhaps it was morning, Fr Simon Fondeville closed his notebook on these words. The following day, or a few days later, on 22nd October 1872, he died in Betharram.

Our brother didn't stand out for the casualness of his style; he didn't have the talent of a storyteller. We also forgive his lack of exactness – he wasn't a Historian. On the other hand, we are grateful to him for recording the chronicle of Betharram life, marked by so many memorable events in the lifetime of Michael Garicoits, priest.

THE FONDEVILLE NOTEBOOK OR BETHARRAM FROM 1790

From May 14th, 1863, onwards...

...At the end, His Excellency gave the absolution and Monsignor Boutoey led the mortal remains to the top of Calvary where they were buried next to the sanctuary in the Chapel of the Resurrection...

In the evening, the Monsignor summoned the priests of the Congregation, invited them to follow the example and virtues of the Founder and promised to reunite us in a General Assembly in the month of October to preside over the election of the Superior and his Council. Before that, he made Mr Chirou responsible for fulfilling the duties of the Superior and appointed Messrs Perguillhem, Cazaban and Fondeville as his Councillors.

The ordination of the Most Holy Trinity gave Betharram Messrs Etchégaray, Casau, Estrate from Géronce, Basilide Bourdenne from Buzay, and for America Messrs Sampuy and Serres, who left in 1859. These gentlemen had made their novitiate at Betharram and knew all the other teachers. In the month of September, the Monsignor came back to Betharram: the whole Assembly, under the direction of His Grace, made its annual retreat. In the last days, the Monsignor presided over the election of the Superior and his Council. America had sent its sealed vote. The result of the ballot made Mr Chirou the Superior and Messrs Romain Bourdenne, Mouthes and Fondeville the Councillors. Mr Bourdenne was nominated Assistant and Mr Fondeville the Cashier and Supplier. (...)

In 1864, the novice teachers Messrs Berdoulet from Montgaillard (Tarbes), Victor Bourdenne from Buzay, Saubatte, Faur from Lagos, Gaby from Ainhova, Miro from Ferrières (Tarbes), Jean Vignolles from Serre-Casters, Peyret from Orthez, and Castainhs from Pau were ordained Priests; the latter was already in America.

In 1865, Quillahauquy, brought up by the

Superior and other teachers, became a Teacher and Study Mentor himself, at Orthez and Oloron. Mr Cescas, another Betharram pupil, sent by the Parish Priest of Bellocq, was ordained a Priest in America and left with two Basque Priests who were going to join Messrs Harbustan and Sardoy, to collaborate in the work in our Congregation: These Basque Priests were Messrs Sallaber from Mendz and Laphitz from Issary. They were going to replace Mr Guimon, who had already passed away, and Mr Barbé, Mr Larrouy and Mr Irigaray, whom God would soon take away from this world. Mr Harbustan, during his journey to France, took these gentlemen. Irigaray, in 1869, joined Mr Mindivil d'Arberoue and Mr Péré from Pontacq ordained. He came, as it were, to take his replacement.

In 1868, Betharram had sent Mr Souverbielle with Mr Serres from Orthez on his return to America. Ten members of the Community who had done their novitiate, and had all come out of our schools, were ordained Priests between 1867 and 1871. (...)

However, despite there being so many members of staff, the available missionaries fell in number.

The residences, the schools, the Minor Seminary of St Mary, the management of Igon, principally the Institution of Betharram took in a high number of religious. In this way, the missionaries were very tired and the work done seemed more or less to decrease. Then the Virgin Mother and Lady of Betharram spoke to Messrs Larraillet from Bizanos and Pomès

the afflicted. Like the Good Samaritan, he was full of compassion, he approached him, he cared for him, he took care of the man abandoned on the roadside as if he were dead. Like the Good Shepherd he takes the lost sheep on his shoulders; like the Father he takes the Prodigal Son in his arms and covers him with kisses.

St Michael Garicoits always associates humiliations and obedience with devotion: "God humble and devoted". Humility, obedience and humiliation are compatible with devotion on condition of being responsible and capable of great deeds; doing as best one can for the benefit of the neighbour. What is the best? It is when Jesus gave himself up on the Cross so that all may have life in abundance. The maximum of mercy corresponds to the maximum of humiliation. It is a question of not being full of good intentions, good words, great projects, but to do all in one's power, just like the Good Samaritan. When he had seen the state of the man lying in the ditch, he carried out these actions: he *approached* him, *dressed* his wounds by *pouring* oil and wine over them; he *loaded* him on his own mount, *took* him to the inn and *took care* of him. The next day he *took* two silver coins and *handed* them to the innkeeper saying: "Look after *him and whatsoever you spend over and above I will repay you on my return*". (Luke 10, 34-35).

Mercy is therefore active. In Matthew 25, 35-36, the King suggests actions also: "For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you dressed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to see me." There

you have the corporal works of mercy. In the performance of her Mission, the Church Mother and Mistress has come to realise that there are other needs of man's spiritual dimension; this is why she expects us to practice the spiritual works of mercy: teach the ignorant, counsel those in need, correct the ignorant, forgive sinners, console the afflicted, bear patiently with the shortcomings of our neighbour, pray to God for the living and the dead.

Pope Francis is dusting down genuine Christian practices and is making the Gospel shine by his attention to the poor: for example, the showers installed on St Peter's Square, the hairdresser sent to the Homeless, the 30 bed dormitory opened in the Vatican. His example has been followed by plenty of parishes and Institutions in the Church. It is something he used to do in Buenos Aires during Lent by charitable events; all benefits were earmarked for social action for the poor, in a different part of his diocese each year.

So that in community we too may live this Holy Year of Mercy, so that with our hearts we may come close to the situation of human misery, so that we too may put our finger on Christ in the person of the poor as we look them in the eyes, I am asking every Betharramite community to have in their monthly project the practice of some work of mercy. Thus we shall learn what it means to live out the reality of our faith according to which "love is expressed more by acts than by words" (St Ignatius of Loyola).

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj
Superior General

Surprised by grace



From the manger to the altar ...

"O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread! Look, brothers, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him! Humble yourselves, as well, that you may be exalted by Him."

Saint Francis, Letter the entire Order vv 23-29

Fr Jiraphat scj and Fr. Kriangsak scj
celebrating mass in a Thai village

our profession we said "I want to live the joy of consecration in community" (R of L 153); have we thought of all the sacrifices and frustrations that such fidelity involves? Far from accusing those who have left, a question remains for us who have stayed. There is such a thing as superficial fidelity in which the heart is not fully engaged. I have been deeply impressed by the question of the Pope on "seeking appearances; there are no public scandals and everything seems to be fine" (E.G. 93). Fidelity and perseverance concern us all so as to show the movement of the Heart of Jesus, the Word Incarnate." (R of L. 2)

These are questions which must be reflected on during this session not just with our eyes but with hearts full of faith and hope. The aim of this session is to allow each formator to give the best of himself without worrying about the results, just like St Michael who showed commitment to Mgr Lacroix even though he didn't get the result hoped for. "Let's do what God wants us to do, and as he wants; let people

say what they like. What about the success? We shall not be judged on that question; success depends on God; He has reserved that for Himself. Let's not meddle with what God has reserved for Himself" (D.S. 235).

This meeting of the formators is intended to enhance the commitment and fervour of those who have been chosen by the Congregation for a task which is often ungrateful but also exciting since it consists of passing on to a new generation our joy of living like St Michael (E.G. 84). May the whole Congregation be united in prayer so that the Betharramite formator be a disciple according to the Heart of Jesus. "The sower cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. The sower, when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact". (E.G. 24).

Laurent Bacho, scj
General Councillor for formation

« In the light of my experience as a formator, being in contact with many youths, talking with them and with different formators, I sometimes do not feel up to the task. I discover more and more how vocation is a complex reality. All I can say and do in discerning a vocation and forming a person for religious life will always be much less than what the grace of God can perform in a person who wants to surrender his life to the Lord. Everything has to be done in an act of faith and mercy. We let grace go its own way...

Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin scj

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the development of the individual; the blossoming of the individual is one of those forms of progress which we are happy to note. It would be difficult for someone full of complexes to witness to "beauty in the footsteps of Jesus" (R of L 137). Without correct self esteem it would be difficult to become a "new man genuinely free". In our Formation Houses efforts exist encouraging a sense of responsibility; the different stages are organised to help the young candidate to discover an area where he can show his talents. However it is up to the formators to detect whatever could be human glorification and which the Pope calls "auto-reference". It is a fact that such carry on is part of human nature always and everywhere. The danger of self centeredness was already pointed out by St Michael: «the preoccupation of me, of myself, the end of all. There is only room for self, with the result that all those preoccupations are where our contemporaries get lost» (DS § 60). Hence the question: how to enter deeper into the mystery of

dejection "in imitation of Jesus humble and obedient" when one sees the sacrifice that this requires? Today it is commonplace to rejoice at all the means of communication which are useful, and make contacts easier; they are also a good means for the apostolate. In our Formation Houses

there is training in the use of these means. We must guard against certain dangers to safeguard interior life, discretion before such temptations, the importance of human relations both in community and outside the community, which will never be replaced by anything on our screen. We must wage war against the relativism and subjectivism of today's world which can influence us but need education (E.G. 88) We are happy at all those commitments by our young brothers and we are sorry that they are lacking elsewhere. It is a grace from the Lord in our Formation Houses and which passes on to the entire Congregation. We are also deeply touched when departures from the Congregation occur a few months or a few years after final commitments. How is the young candidate to be formed in a greater obedience and perseverance? One can wonder if those candidates sufficiently gauged the seriousness of final vows or ordination. It's not just a contract but a consecration before God and the Church. On the day of



A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF ROME

Recognizing Jesus in his truth

"BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?" ASKS JESUS THE DISCIPLES (Mt 16:15). "STILL TODAY, SAYS POPE FRANCIS, THE QUESTION ECHOES IN OUR CONSCIENCE, AS HIS DISCIPLES, AND IS DECISIVE FOR OUR IDENTITY AND OUR MISSION. ONLY IF WE RECOGNIZE JESUS IN HIS TRUTH, WILL WE BE ABLE TO SEE THE TRUTH IN OUR HUMAN CONDITION, AND WILL WE BE ABLE TO MAKE OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FULL HUMANIZATION OF SOCIETY."

...At the root of the mystery of salvation, [...] lies the will of a merciful God who does not want to surrender to the misunderstandings, failures and misery of man, but gives himself to the point of becoming a man himself in order to meet each person in his or her actual condition. This merciful love of God is what Simon Peter recognizes in Jesus' face. The same face that we are called to recognize in the forms in which the Lord has assured us of his presence in our midst: [...]

This truth of the faith is a truth that scandalizes, because it asks one to believe in Jesus, who, despite being in the form of God, emptied himself, humbled himself, taking on the form of a servant, even unto death on the cross, and for this God made him Lord of the Universe (cf. Phil 2:6-11). It is the truth that still today scandalizes those who cannot bear the mystery of God imprinted on the face of Christ. It is the truth that we cannot touch and embrace, as St Paul says, without entering into the mystery of Jesus Christ, and without making his feelings our own (cf. Phil 2:5). Only by beginning from

the heart of Christ can we understand, profess and live his Truth.

In reality, the communion between the divine and human, fully realized in Jesus, is our destination, the culmination of human history according to the Father's design. It is the blessedness of the encounter between our weakness and his greatness, between our smallness and his mercy which will compensate every one of our limitations. This aim is not only the horizon that illuminates our path, but is also what attracts us with his gentle strength; it is what offers a foretaste and lives here and is built day after day with all the good that we sow around us. These are the seeds that help to create a new, renewed humanity, where no one is left on the margins or discarded; where those who serve are greatest; where the small and the poor are accepted and helped.

Extract from
the homily of the Holy Father,
on November 10th, 2015, in Florence

Overview of the Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region

AT THE END OF HIS SECOND CANONICAL VISITATION OF THE “SAINT MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED” REGION, FR GASPAR DESCRIBES THE LIFE AND THE DREAMS OF THIS VAST AND MULTIFACETED REGION.

THE EMERGING PICTURE IS VERY COLORFUL, WITH MANY LIGHTS AND SOME SHADES. THIS MAKES US UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS STILL LONG WAY TO GO AND ENTHUSIASM AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE NEEDED. FR GASPAR IS NARRATING AN ANCIENT HISTORY (ENGLAND), A RECENT ONE (THAILAND) AND A VERY RECENT ONE (INDIA).

Thanks to this Region the Congregation can face the future with confidence. It is the youngest Region and has seen its numbers increase. It is the Region which has had the greatest number of ordinations in the last ten years. It is the Region which shows the presence of the missionary spirit by the exchange of religious within the Region itself and at the exterior too: 2 Indian religious in England, 1 Indian religious in the Holy Land, 1 Thai religious in France, 1 Indian and 1 Thai religious in Vietnam.

The English Vicariate has a much reduced number of religious: 6 religious-priests and 6 religious-brothers to which can be added two Indian religious Fr Wilfred and Fr Vincent as well as Fr Alessandro Locatelli from the Italian Vicariate. The two communities (3 residences) forming the Vicariate are in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The two communities have a rhythm of prayer and community meetings which enable them to live fraternity fully. Each of the communities provides a pastoral accompaniment for a parish: Olton, Great Barr, and Droitwich. There are two other parishes accompanied by Fr Innamorati and Fr Anton. A few of the

religious-brothers have found their mission as chaplains in Catholic schools. It is obvious that they would love to organise activities for the promotion of vocations but problems have arisen to prevent this. In their simple lifestyle they are faithful to the Betharramite image which is easily an attraction for the young. They cultivate their identity on the occasion of spirituality meetings which they organise during the annual retreat of the Vicariate, and on three or four other occasions at Nympsfield where all participate.

The “Companions of Betharram” are groups of laity wishing to live according to the charism of the Congregation; they are in communion with the religious by collaborating in different aspects of their mission. Every year a retired couple from education go as volunteers to teach English to our young candidates in Chiang Mai.

The Thai Vicariate has changed in appearance in the last ten years. The oldest French missionaries have retired from the mission. Several have returned home; two Italian missionaries carry on with some activities, two others have slowed up but prefer to stay. The young Betharramite

Formation: present scenario

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR (2015), ON THIS COLUMN OF THE NEF WE PUT FORWARD THREE QUESTIONS TO PRESENT OUR FORMATION HOUSES IN THE DIFFERENT REGIONS. WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED? WHO ARE OUR FORMATORS? WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS OF THE FORMATION PROJECT AND HOW ARE THEY IMPLEMENTED? AND WE SET OUT FOR A LONG JOURNEY ALONG THE DIFFERENT CONTINENTS.

WHILE ALL ARE REFERRING TO THE BETHARRAMITE FORMATION GUIDE, EACH FORMATION HOUSE IS FOLLOWING ITS OWN “STYLE” ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL CULTURE AND THE ECCLESIAL CONTEXT.

IN THIS LAST CONTRIBUTION, FR LAURENT BACHO SCJ, GENERAL COUNCILLOR FOR FORMATION, HELPS US TO RECAP WHAT HAS BEEN SAID SO FAR AND FORMULATES THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION, REMINDING US THAT THE BETHARRAMITE FORMATION “REQUIRES TOTAL COMMITMENT BY A PERSON TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST; A PROCESS WHICH LASTS THROUGHOUT LIFE”. THIS CHALLENGE IS STILL BEFORE US ...

For the last few editions of the NEF Formation Houses were invited to introduce themselves. Next month, 29th January 2016 the formators are being invited to Rome for a ten day session; this is a bit like an extension of the session which was held in Adiapodoume in July 2007. We are very aware of the void which is facing us in Europe but happy to welcome the beginnings which we can see in the other three continents. This makes it possible for nine religious of the younger realities of our Congregation to be members of communities in the “more ancient parts of the Congregation”. A “ratio formationis”, renewed and improved, is gradually taking shape together with all the necessary translations. This tool concerns all the religious who feel a vocational impulse. “Our witness as religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and happy to live out their own vocation in a fraternal and apostolic community is a living invitation to follow

Christ in the footsteps of St Michael Garicoits” (R of L 139). It is normal that this tool concerns the formators first of all but they need to feel supported by their brethren, this work is such an ungrateful task. Furthermore, ongoing formation far from being an annex of initial formation is really a necessary extension of it. For each one ongoing formation should be a lifelong exercise because “consecrated life requires total commitment by a person to the person of Christ; a process which lasts throughout life. It is a matter of progressively assimilating the sentiments of the Son’s offering to the Father” (R of L 136). From our own experience we know that we are always on the way.

It is good that all the religious are aware of the challenges facing the Formation Houses and will be part of the different reflexions during the Formators’ session in Rome.

Today great progress has been made in

NOTICES FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Decisions of the Superior General and his Council



During the General Council on November 14th, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, **admitted to final profession Br Juan Pablo García Martínez and Br Alcides Ramón Riveros Díaz** (Region Fr Auguste Etchecopar, Vicariate of Argentina & Vicariate of Paraguay)

On the schedule

- From January 21st to 26th. Commission for the recyclage session in 2016. (Fr. Jacky Moura, Fr. Gustavo Agin, Br. Andrew Ferris, Fr. Gianluca Limonta, Fr. Graziano Sala)
- From January 29th to February 6th. Meeting of the Betharramite Formation Team with the persons in charge of formation in the Congrégation.
- From February 8th to 14th. Council of the Congregation. (The Superior General, the General Councillors, the Regional Superiors)

religious have, little by little, taken over the running of the different mission posts vacated by the most senior brethren. Our presence most worthy of notice is in the diocese of Chiang Mai where our mission started a little more than 60 years ago, when our missionaries committed themselves with great enthusiasm to the evangelisation and organisation of the diocese thanks to the great number of conversions that had taken place. Today we are present in six mission posts: Ban Betharram, Maepon, Chomthong, Huay Tong, Huay Bong, and Ban Pong. For the past ten years we are present in the diocese of Nakhon Sawan in the missionary post at Maetawar, with the mountain people, the Karens. The major part of the evangelisation has been done there by closely accompanying the people as Pope Francis asks. The Daughters of the Cross collaborate with us also. In the Diocese of Bangkok we are in charge of the formation of the young in philosophy and theology and of the junior seminarians at Sampran. In the Vicariate of Thailand great care has been taken for the promotion of vocations. They speak about vocations to the children early on and in different places: at the catechism centre at Maepon, at the hostel at Phayao for the college students, at Ban Betharram and at Sampran for the three years at the lycee, two years stage in the different mission posts when they are attached to the missionary house at Chiang Mai, finally Ban Garicoits at Sampran for the four years of philosophy. Finally they are sent to Bangalore for the two years of novitiate before returning to Ban Garicoits for the four years of theology.

Every effort is made for vocational pastoral and formation but such efforts are often scattered with the result that a lot of energy is wasted and it is impossible to do real formation so called. In all these posts the religious works on his own, demanding great efforts from every one and making it difficult to accompany the young candidates adequately. It's a work- style which goes against what was said in a council of the Congregation, namely "the formators must not be alone"

It must be added that in all those houses, the formators and the young candidates cover, by their work, part of the cost of their formation. We see that to be a good thing so as to cultivate the spirit which is ours in Thailand and consequently formation is closest to the reality of the world. The great treasure of the Thai Vicariate is its poverty which helps the religious to be closest to the people, sharing with them what they need to live. They are short of nothing because countless benefactors take part in the mission of the religious as well as in the formation. The religious accompany the people by helping them with their agricultural work as well as facing the problems which any family can meet. They are greatly loved. Their lifestyle is what the Pope has been calling for. They are prophets who by their way of life reject the lifestyle of a section of the clergy who are more like Civil Servants. The Thai Church appreciates the style of Betharram. This style which is prophetic is difficult to maintain today. It is under attack by the worldliness of western culture which is creeping in, even by some of our religious who, accepting common opinion, think



Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez visiting Thailand, accompanied by Mr. Luigi Pirovano, accountant & Betharramite lay member, November-December 2015

that they need money to be more successful. But only two or three individuals are concerned.

In the Indian Vicariate the ordination of new and numerous brothers led us "to go out of" the formation houses in Bangalore and Mangalore so as to organise new mission posts and to react to the challenges of the mission in the local church. In 2014 the construction of the Formation House in Mangalore was finished thanks to the financial help of the laity, of friends of Betharram and thanks also to the gift of the land and part of the house by the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel. Promotion of vocations is satisfactory as is the formation given; consequently each year we have new candidates. Besides the formation communities we have our religious working in the two parishes of Adigondanahally, and

others in charge of a parish at Tiptur (diocese of Bangalore). In the north-east of India, in the state of Assam, a community is in charge of a mission at Hojai where they look after a large college, a hostel for young people from further inland and who can do their studies at the college. The community also

accompanies small base Christian Communities scattered inland. The mission of the Vicariate has also a social dimension. The two Formation communities in Bangalore and Mangalore look after a hostel where they take in and care for the street children who have no families, to help them grow up in a more serene atmosphere. To achieve this they rely on numerous benefactors who help them financially or with goods (for example food, clothing etc.). A few months before her death, a French lady bequeathed them an important sum of money for this purpose. The problem with the new missionary communities in India is that they don't profit by the tradition of the fraternity and missionary spirit so much part of Betharram. Everything is new. I even had to insist on the importance for us of the commu-



their lives; to take the path of freedom in order to reach true love that is surrendering oneself. The day ended in the chapel where all prayed the evening prayer and the rosary.

Region

India

Hojai ► The community experienced God's abundant blessings as the month of November had been a month of sweet memories. Throughout the month we had Mass for the departed souls in the parish and in the villages. November 14th was a colourful day as the teachers gave a fantastic Children's day programme in honour of the children. On 22nd November Fr. Jesuraj SCJ led the parishioners to Guwahati for the Diocesan Eucharistic procession. The students of the school, the parishioners, and neighbouring religious sisters jointly gave birthday wishes to our fathers Arul and Jesuraj.

From 26th to 30th November the Vicariate council was held at Hojai chaired by the Regional Vicar Fr. Biju Paul SCJ. It was a moment of reunion and exploration of further mission possibilities. The community presented the reflective booklet on *Laudato Si'*. It was a new adventure of the community to introduce a comprehensive 'Prayer Calendar' of the Congregation. This calendar consists

of all the communities of the Congregation and some selected sayings of St. Michael Garicoits. The community is strengthened now with Brothers Vipin and Edwin joining the community as part of their final profession preparations.

Novitiate community ► The months of October & November was a time of Sharing the Spirituality and the Charism of our Congregation especially as we prayed the Holy Rosary at the Homes of our Companions and friends and celebrated the Feast of Our Mother of the Holy Rosary.

We also had our monthly recollection at the CSST-Generalate which was guided by Rev. Sr. Josephatte, Vicar General of the CSST Congregation.

Our 2nd Year novices very faithfully to the "Ecce Venio" rendered their one month of Service at The Camillian Fathers Aid's Center, Bangalore. The community also joined the Church as we celebrated some festivals of the States our Brothers come from: Raiyotsava e Diwali.

We also request your earnest prayers for our five brothers Anton Joshua, Rajendra, Thanith James, Rawee Peter and Akhil Joseph who are making their one month of Ignatian retreat, also for their Jesuit Companions and for their retreat guide Rev. Fr. Jose Jacob S.J.



Region



France-Spain

Community recollection ► November 9 - Every two months, the community of Pibrac, holds a day of recollection at the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of the Desert, about twenty kilometers away from Pibrac.

Everyone was invited to read the reflection Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj, Regional Superior, had shared during the Assembly of the Vicariate which took place late October at Betharram. This text, titled "Merciful like the Father", wanted to draw a parallel between the bull of indiction of the Year of Mercy published by Pope Francis and the betharramite spirituality.

Then the religious shared the graces received from God, for which they wanted to give thanks, and tried to see how they could live in their community life the "works of mercy".

In particular they decided to focus on two points: first, welcome without fear the pilgrims and give a contribution to help two families that have been giving shelter for two months to some Iraqi refugees. Second, create some "oases of mercy" in the parish and the whole pastoral area. This is the challenge the community has accepted to face!

Holy Land

Assembly ► On 20 and 21 November the Meeting of the Vicariate was held in the community of Bethlehem. The meeting, chaired by the Regional Superior, Fr Jean-Luc Morin scj, was a good opportunity to plan the implementation of the Regional Project for the



year 2015-2016.

The novices joined the Assembly on 20th November afternoon. During a fraternal exchange, all the members of the community thanked the God of mercy for the graces received. On Saturday, November 21, the fathers concelebrated the Eucharist of the Feast of the Presentation of Mary, in the Chapel of the Carmelite Monastery at the presence of the Carmelite community. Before the end of the meeting a Council of the Vicariate took place. Next step for the Vicariate: a community pilgrimage on the occasion of the Jubilee Year of mercy.

Central African Republic

Promoting vocation ► November 14th, young Betharramite aspirants gathered at the "St. Michael" community at Bouar. They continued their reflection on the theme: "Vocation-Motivation-Discernment".

First everyone was able to express themselves on how to bring about a real change. This is what emerged from the discussion: I learn how to live the Gospel values - I recognize what is wrong in my life and I decide to take, with determination, the path of conversion - I accept to get help from my spiritual director ...

Then Br Angelo and Br Gilbert encouraged them to live out, in everyday life, the decisions taken; to let God take possession of

nity, but it is something which they take on board with difficulty thus running the risk of pastoral activism a bit individualist. Some religious in the Vicariate would like to set up important works like other congregations in India. Together with Father Austin, the Regional Superior, we say that the communities should be as near as possible to the people, that they should be noted for their simple lifestyle and not by important works which by their display of wealth and power, turn people away and are often the opposite to the witness of the Gospel. We think that by being close to the people with simplicity responds better to the Pope's wishes, and to what a Sister told us when we held the Council of Congregation in India in 2007.

Since it is the youngest Region we had to entrust the government and formation to young religious, which puts us in contact with a number of fragile points and creates some problems for us.

England is the most senior Vicariate and weakest in the number of religious but it helps India both financially and spiritually. It collaborates by transmitting faithfully the charism during retreats and days of reflexion in the other Vicariates. The novitiate which is in India for this Vicariate and for Thailand contributes greatly to mutual understanding and integration of the religious in the two Vicariates and at Regional level. However this integration is still a trifle fragile because the three Vicariates are very different from the point of view of culture and language, therefore communication is not easy because of these cultural and linguistic differences.

To maintain the unity of the Region it is

necessary to intensify the exchange of religious within the three Vicariates and to organise meetings at every level: Regional chapter, meetings of formators, meetings of superiors etc. The Region is full of life and a great missionary richness. It is our duty to take good care of it but also to trust the Lord of the Harvest who allowed the Gospel and the charism of Betharram to be sown in such places. It is He who will best know how to take care of it and will make it increase for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj
Superior General

The importance of Christmas for the Betharramites

CHRISTMAS OR THE BIRTH OF CHRIST PROVING HIS INCARNATION TO THE WORLD OUGHT TO BE FOR THE RELIGIOUS OF BETHARRAM AND FOR THE LAITY SHARING THEIR CHARISM AND SPIRITUALITY THE FEAST WHICH REMINDS THEM OF THEIR VOCATION AND THE DEMANDS OF THEIR MISSION.

St Michael was amazed and fascinated by the love of God preceding each of our merits which was evident in all its fullness by the Incarnation of the Word. He offered himself to his Father by his "Here I Am" so as to be at the service of mankind throughout his whole life even to the sacrifice of the Cross.

The Word made Man took his Incarnation seriously; he became fully and totally "man" and "flesh"; the choice of the Word was definitive. The Incarnate Christ's "Here I Am" is eternal. The fullness of the commitment, the truth of the sharing, the depth of the identity (except in the case of sin, although Christ became a sinner for our sakes) show the seriousness with which he was at the service of mankind.

Saint Michael noticed all the seriousness of the Incarnation: the shock of a God entering into the humility and weakness of the history of mankind to share its weaknesses and (while at the same time showing ways and means of overcoming them), drove St Michael to follow in the footsteps of Christ so as to imitate and follow the "folly of his love". The sons of St Michael are also called to take the Incarnation seriously, which should be extended and be actualised among their contemporaries by their life and mission of

«Christmas!

Who is this little Child just born?
Whom I see lying in the manger,
weeping,
trembling with cold,
asking for milk,
and who appears to be no different from any other child?



The
Son of God
Himself.

Let us be thrilled
with admiration,
with tenderness,
with gratitude.

Little Child,
you are my God,
my Saviour,
my All.

You!»

(St Michael Garicoits)

evangelisation. Our Congregation is a Congregation (as our Rule of Life reminds us) whose task is to reproduce Christ's "Here I Am" (modal) for the salvation of mankind (mission).

As Sons of St Michael Christ's Incarnation invites us to reflect on and update the idea of "Incarnation". "To become incarnate" means to be present in the midst of mankind, to be visible, to understand the different personal and cultural situations, feel the anxieties and questions of people longing to share their problems, their hopes, and their expectations, and at the same time giving them the where with all to work out their salvation and redemption. In a sublime way all this was what made up Christ's Incarnation. To revive the "Here I Am" of the Incarnation is the task of Betharramites religious and laity. For them it means being incarnate today in History and in the Church. If you like it's the fate to which all the Betharramites are

doomed; the reality of our charism is eternal in so far as it is a constant preoccupation about the expectations and demands of mankind everywhere, all the time and in every situation. In the same way as Christ's Incarnation among men is eternal.

Christmas, that is the Incarnation, the "realisation" of "Here I Am" appears as the indispensable foundation of every aspect, both spiritual and pastoral of the work and mission of the Betharramites. It is the root of our spirituality of the Incarnation. The Word chose our humanity; he became poor; he became the backup of anyone wounded, down-trodden, and persecuted or in need; the backup of the rejected as Pope Francis would say today. The road of the sons of St Michael must follow the mystery of the Incarnation (if they are to be called "Betharramites"). On this way, as St Michael reminds us we must assume the feelings which were present in the Heart of Christ Incarnate:

This Christmas we Betharramite religious and laity, worship the God who became an infant to show us the Father's mercy. After experiencing this mercy ourselves, in this Holy Year we long to practice ore intensely the works of mercy for the needy who live around us.

Merry Christmas and a Jubilee of mercy!

*Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General*

charity, humility, obedience, devotion, sentiments which were spoken by the Word: "Ecce venio, Here I Am".

The Incarnation involves a tending towards God and towards man. It is a relation which is transformed into a surge, forgetful of self and grows through care of the Other and of others and since it takes place in time becomes a project and a gift.

To celebrate Christmas is, for the sons and disciples of St Michael to immerse one's self in the mystery of God's Love, made visible and tangible through the Incarnation; thereby getting reason, light and strength so that in the constant movement of time and cultures the Incarnate love is a reality... always inviting "new incarnations": ours.

Ennio Bianchi scj