



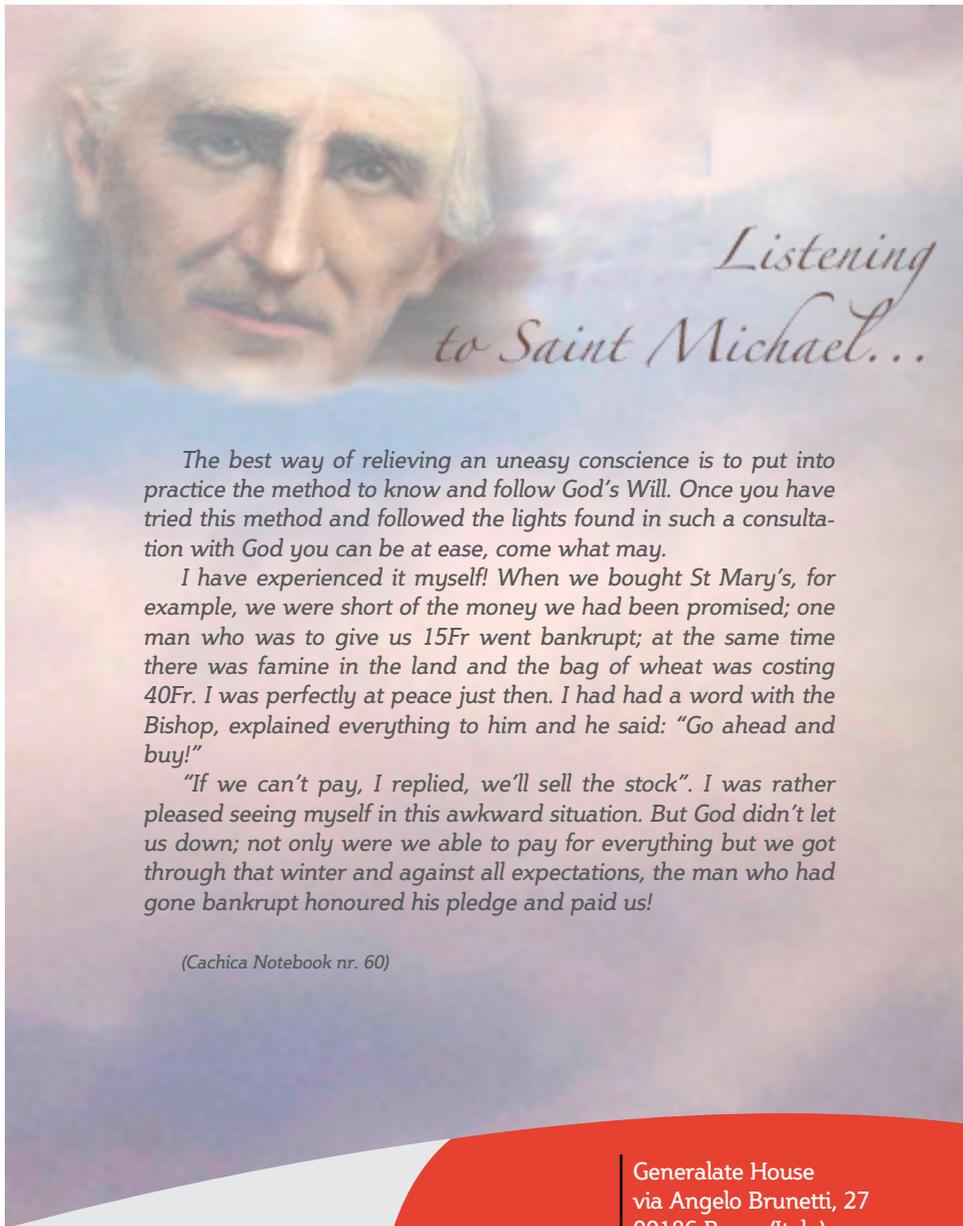
Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

109
2015

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*Listening
to Saint Michael...*

The best way of relieving an uneasy conscience is to put into practice the method to know and follow God's Will. Once you have tried this method and followed the lights found in such a consultation with God you can be at ease, come what may.

I have experienced it myself! When we bought St Mary's, for example, we were short of the money we had been promised; one man who was to give us 15Fr went bankrupt; at the same time there was famine in the land and the bag of wheat was costing 40Fr. I was perfectly at peace just then. I had had a word with the Bishop, explained everything to him and he said: "Go ahead and buy!"

"If we can't pay, I replied, we'll sell the stock". I was rather pleased seeing myself in this awkward situation. But God didn't let us down; not only were we able to pay for everything but we got through that winter and against all expectations, the man who had gone bankrupt honoured his pledge and paid us!

(Cachica Notebook nr. 60)

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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

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

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**Do everything
in the name of the Lord**
(Col. 3,17)

In the course of a meeting of Catholic teachers in Paraguay in which I was partaking, they read letter 258 of St Michael Garicoits; this passage drew my attention: "*Unite yourself as much as possible to God and Our Lady either in prayer or in each of your actions to obtain from the source of all good, a large share in his gifts and graces for yourself and your community and much power and effectiveness for all the ways which you are using to help these poor, and good souls.*"

With great prudence and wisdom St Michael talks about union with God and with Christ in prayer as in action. There is a widespread misunderstanding which is dangerous, that is separating times of prayer from the rest of life and so reducing our Christian life as a time of prayer only; consequently the activities of our everyday life are a parallel life, disconnected from prayer and only guided by the

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"Doing the lowliest jobs allotted to you. That is what God asks of you, the fulfilment of it will sanctify you".

criteria of a practical relativism.

Christian life has its roots in the person of Jesus Christ, God made Man, who went through this world doing good; who gave up his life on the Cross; who was united in prayer and in the activities of his mission with the Father; and who was raised from the dead to save us and share with us a newness of life. No human reality is foreign for those who believe in Jesus; He took on our humanity, through which we enter into contact with Him and remain united to Him.

The adult Christian is someone who has begun to accept himself as a gift from God, with all the power needed to be of service to others but also with all his shortcomings and sin which prevent him from thinking that he is superior to others

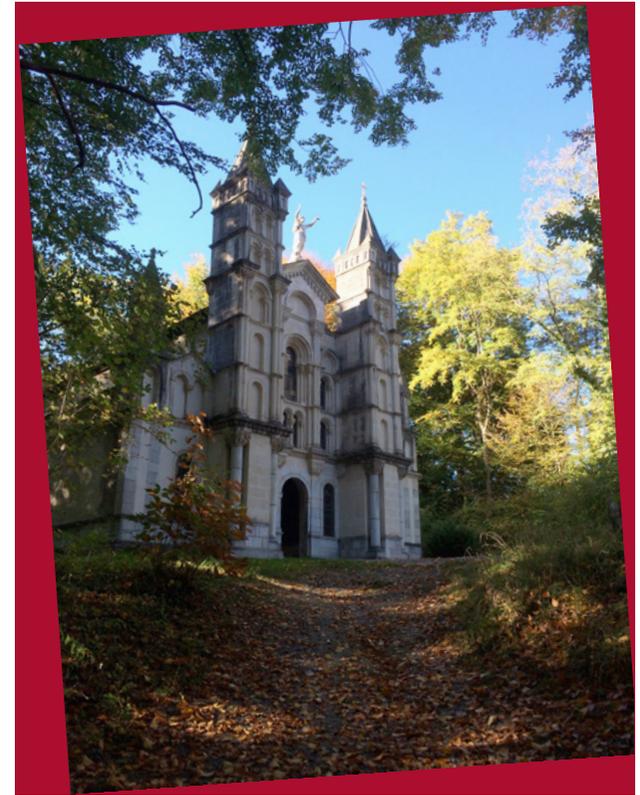
and make him aware that he too is in need of God's forgiveness, that he needs others to become better.

The adult Christian is someone who accepts, with great realism, the individuals with whom he rubs shoulders in a given situation. He welcomes the influence of their qualities, accepts their faults as challenges welcoming him to give the best of himself, of withholding nothing – that's what love means; with charity and courage he bears the cross and problems that have no solution.

The adult Christian is one who loves those with whom he is living, instead of wasting his time in whingeing over violence, the scourge of war, drugs or the breakup of families. He doesn't think that today is any worse than the rest of human

deacon and subdeacon. After the Gospel, the Bishop climbed the pulpit and paraphrased a verse from the Book of Wisdom: *"The upright man was led by her along straight paths. She showed him the Kingdom of God and taught him the knowledge of holy things. She brought him success in his labours and gave him full return for all his labours."* Childhood, youth and old age, divine calling, faithfulness to vocation, his words, selflessness, priesthood, cooperation, the administration of the Daughters of the Cross and his founding of the Betharram Congregation - everything was detailed and entered naturally into the words of the text.

The works of Providence on this beautiful soul was visible in all its splendour - The Monsignor taking the poor child from Ibarre, guiding him from his family home to a modest household, where he was prepared for Holy Communion. Through this act, he was noticed by a revered parish priest as being no ordinary child. The Diocese received him as a pupil, pushed him towards the priesthood, sent him to Larressore, to Betharram, where the Blessed Virgin needed to use him to continue the work of Betharram. The Monsignor finished his funeral prayer by claiming the help of the large congregation - their prayers for the venerated



Bétharram, chapel of the Resurrection, first burial place of Michael Garicoits

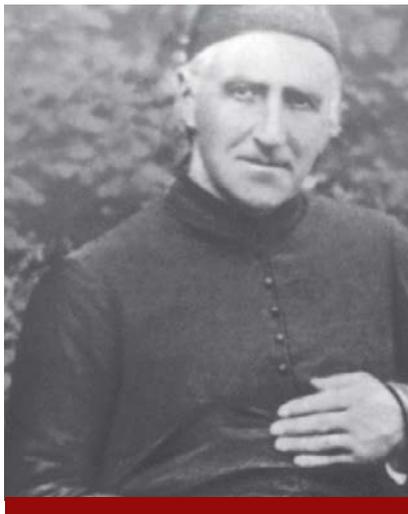
deceased - not doubting at all that this could be invoked beneficially. At the end, His Excellency gave the absolution and Monsignor Boutoey led the mortal remains to the top of Calvary where they were buried next to the sanctuary in the Chapel of the Resurrection.

Simon Fonderville scj
(1805-1872)

(to be continued)

1863... Michael Garicoïts' death... His funeral...

In 1863 - a regrettable year for Betharram - on the 14th of Mary's month, the anniversary day of the Ascension of Our Lord, at 3am, the Excellent Founder of the Congregation returned his soul to God. It was quite near his normal getting up time. Since 1853 when he suffered an attack of paralysis, he had been more or less an invalid, but after being



'bled', he used to recover his former health. Given his age and a suspected tumor, he could not undergo the customary therapy, since he was also a little stout when God called him home. The day before he had been in front of the Bishop on a pastoral visit to Mirepeix - and the Community of Igon that he had guided for more than 30 years, captured his blessing for the first and last time.

At the news of this unexpected death, the Community of Igon got up and about immediately. The Convent of Igon which had seen him the day before, had admired the ways of Providence and the two houses united their prayers for the dear and revered deceased.

They displayed his body in the common room which had been turned into a Chap-

el of Rest. Priests succeeded each other for prayer in the day, as was always done when a priest died. During the night, two brothers kept vigil and prayed, taking turns each hour. On the evening of the 15th (Friday), the Monsignor returned to Betharram around 7:30pm and after having prayed beside the venerated body, he went up to his quarters

and after addressing words of consolation to the Community, he settled the time of the Confirmation and the funeral.

At around half past nine on the 16th May, after the Confirmation was over, Mr Boutoey - Vicar General - went to collect the body, accompanied by numerous clergy. Pau, Orthez, Sarrance and Oloron were represented in the Congregation. The surrounding parishes competed in showing devotion to join their pastors. They all wanted to show remorse to God and Mary for having deserved that this soul, who had done them so much good, should be taken away from them. They all wanted to pray for his soul and bear his suffering. Fathers Chirou, Carrérot and Fondeville led the funeral procession. Father Gaye, Archpriest of Pau, sang the Mass with a

history. He is capable of reading the signs of the times, signs of a God who loves the men and women of today, men and women of flesh and blood and continues to work for their good. Thinking that at some other time in history, in another context, in another family, another community, another School, one would be better off is the height of illusions! Discerning God's will for me is to be practised where I am now, in the middle of all the possibilities and in the midst of so many false hopes. Oh Holy Spirit, inspire me!

The adult Christian is someone who, knowing his limits commits himself totally to performing his work as best he can, with generosity. That's where God is waiting for him, waiting for him to contribute to the good of individuals and the growth of a new world.

That's how the missionary disciple does God's will in this world as it is done in Heaven: *"by offering boundless charity, in the limits of his present position because it is a God given gift."*

Thus, given these circumstances, this position, within his limits, the adult Christian will recognise the face of Christ in the face of any brother in need. (Matt 25) It is in this suffering body that the Lord is inviting him to touch wounded humanity in his brother and to care for him with the *"oil of consolation and the wine of hope"*.

Here is another quotation from St Michael Garicoïts found on Diego Barbe's Facebook (by the way there is a thought for every day from our saintly Founder): *"Perfection consists in doing our ordinary actions well, in performing our duties well. Some often say, 'If only I was in that posi-*

tion, in that house, with so and so for Superior, with such and such a class... then I would make progress and benefit and become a saint!' Illusion! Perform well your everyday duties: sweeping, washing up, doing the lowliest jobs allotted to you. That is what God asks of you, the fulfilment of it will sanctify you!" (DS 271)

In the life of the missionary disciple prayer is very important. It should be the framework of your entire day: in the morning, meditation of the Word of God assigned by the Church to each day; at the end of the day Examen of Conscience so as to discover in the light of the Word of God the presence and actions of God in my life, then to thank Him, praise and bless Him for all the gifts received, finally to ask forgiveness for the lack of courage in putting certain aspects of the Word into practice. In between those two moments of prayer professional activities follow on; taken on their own these professional activities are an act of praise of God and a service of mankind; but it is so much better when one is aware of this when, at one moment or another, we turn our thoughts to God.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj
Superior General

SNAPSHOTS OF BETHARRAMITE LIFE

The glory of the Lord shines upon you



In the flowery paths of the cemetery in Betharram, on the top of the hill, brother Theodore scj, as ever devoted and attentive to detail, pays regular visits to straighten up a branch, pull up some weeds, in a word make sure that our brothers rest in peace.

Picture taken by Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

- It is like an obligation to be open to others to share the hope of Christ;
 - It is like an example to follow in its simplicity of patience, perseverance and goodness;
 - It is like a way of life: By *sharing* the joy of being sons and daughters of God with others; By *seeking* peace “so that in your heart united to the heart of the good master, everything should be calm and peaceful”;
- By acting:**
- “By the silence of our lives to stop the flow dragging us away from God.”
 - By listening, observing, reading the Word of God, and books by human authors.
 - By accepting my limits, my trust in God just like that of Abraham.

What are the links which exist between the lay members?

- The brothers and sisters are not chosen but are a gift. We are invited to let ourselves be loved and transformed by them.
- There is a great wealth in our differences: age, personal history, geography, and yet there is a closeness and affection which are real. There are the retreats, the July week-ends, festivities in Betharram, at St Michael’s in Pau which nourish our faith and our way of life.
- There is the strength of our Charter if we take the trouble to read it!
- The Council helps us to hold together, to take a long view of things, not to scatter.
- I took life easy as part of the Fraternity, having a look when I felt like it; then things gradually got unblocked. Now I am well and truly part of the system!

...Between the laity and the Religious?

- Now there is the whole hearted welcome, comfort with the religious, goodness; St Michael Garicoits – a school of goodness and kindness; appreciated, welcomed, listened to and not judged – all that helps us to make progress.
- Between the religious and the laity: a shared lesson, the link between the spiritual (the Word of God, St Michael’s writings, Church History) and the realities of everyday life (married couples, loneliness, unemployment, the refugee crisis) respect of each of our reactions, all this enables us to be a mutual help and to see things more clearly in the complexity of situations in everyday life.
- I like the moments when we can discuss a text, see how others are interpreting it and reacting to it. We help each other by the way in which we discuss our situations.
- Discussion of a particular action and prayer strengthens the links between religious and laity.
- In the international meetings the frontiers have been overcome; we found ourselves – men and women – on the same terrain, children of God, enriched by St Michael, overcoming our differences as we repeated “Here I am!”. The religious of the Sacred Heart share with us on their way through France or through the pages of the NEF, evangelisation “to the ends of the earth”.
- Collaboration in administrative matters.
- This year we were able to help at the Reception Notre Dame, to take part in the daily life of the Community (just like in any family), all that with moments of prayer in the oratory, discovery of the life of the religious, their prayer life and the different tasks to be performed at the Sanctuary, the Reception, always in the service of the mission.

THE LAITY AND THE CHARISM OF BETHARRAM

Discernment on a common experience

LIKE OTHER LAY BETHARRAMITES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THE MEMBERS OF THE FRATERNITY **ME VOICI** (FRENCH AND SPANISH VICARIATE) DRINK AT THE SAME SOURCE AS THE RELIGIOUS OF BETHARRAM. DURING ONE OF THEIR RECENT GROUP MEETINGS WE ASKED THEM TO TELL US BRIEFLY SOMETHING ABOUT THIS SOURCE AND WHAT IT DOES FOR THEM. THIS WAS NOT AN EASY EXERCISE BECAUSE EACH ONE HAD TO KEEP HIS MIND ON HIS OWN STORY, HIS IMPRESSIONS AND PERSONAL REFLEXIONS SO AS TO REACH A COMBINED ANSWER.

 What does the Spirituality of St Michael do for you?

It gives me a fresh burst of energy, the answer to be given every time I say: "Here I am". For me it is rigour in goodness, the spirit of obedience, freedom in love. It helps me to have an eye on Jesus, letting Him be fully present in me, and that I should live in Him. It is an opening of the spirit helping me to be grateful for the love He has for everyone: "It has so pleased God to be loved".



Council of the Fraternité Me Voici
with Fr. Bacho scj

It is a love which is there in the depths of our humanity; there is no place unknown to the Father or the Son, whatever is human is close to Them. St Michael knows how to convince me, to reassure me: "God has so loved me that He is happy to accept my love"; amazement and renewed joy fill my heart. I am very aware of the "here and now" of the Incarnation; I try to be as fully present as possible to the present moment; to the person opposite or beside me; to the little chores to be performed without grumbling; to discerning the "why" or "wherefore" to be given. I have received from Him the gift of love for those who have had enough of suffering. A few years ago I discovered that I had to put love first and not fear. As our Saint is wont to say: "Are you afraid of God? Throw yourselves in his arms"! "The saints know how to speak to our hearts"! Thank you.

 How do you cope with it?

Every time I recite the Lord's Prayer I am reminded of my links with the Betharramite family as I say "Thy will be done":

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF ROME

To those who gave their life for the world

WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN EXCERPT TAKEN FROM THE HOMILY GIVEN BY POPE FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASS FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS, WHO DIED OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR. VATICAN BASILICA, NOVEMBER 3RD, 2015. UNITED IN PRAYER FOR BETHARRAM IN HEAVEN.

This style of God, which saves us by serving us and annihilating himself, has much to teach us. We would expect a triumphant divine victory; instead, Jesus shows us an extremely humble victory. Raised on the cross, he allows evil and death to rage against Him while He continues to love. It is difficult for us to accept this reality. It is a mystery, but the secret of this mystery, of this extraordinary humility is altogether in the strength of love. In Jesus' Easter we see at the same time death and the remedy to death, and this is possible because of the great love with which God has loved us, because of the humble love that abases itself, because of the service that is able to assume the condition of the servant. Thus Jesus not only took away evil, but He transformed it into good, not in appearance, but in essence, not on the surface, but at the root. He made of the cross a bridge to life. We can also conquer with Him, if we choose helpful and humble love, which remains victorious for eternity. It is a love that does not cry out and does not impose itself, but is able to wait with trust and patience because – as the Book of Lamentations reminded

us – "it is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" (3:26). "God so loved the world." We are led to love what we feel we are in need of and desire. God, instead, loves the world to the end, namely us, as we are. In this Eucharist He also comes to serve us, to give us the life that saves from death and fills with hope. While we offer this Mass for our dear Brother Cardinals and Bishops, we ask for ourselves what the Apostle Paul exhorts us: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2); love of God and of our neighbor, more than of our needs. We must not be concerned about what we are lacking down here, but about the treasure up there; not for what is useful to us but what is really useful. May the Lord's Easter be sufficient for us, to be free of the anxiety for ephemeral things, which pass and vanish into nothing. May He be enough, in whom are life, salvation, resurrection and joy. Then we will be servants according to His heart: not functionaries that serve, but loved children that give their life for the world.



LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

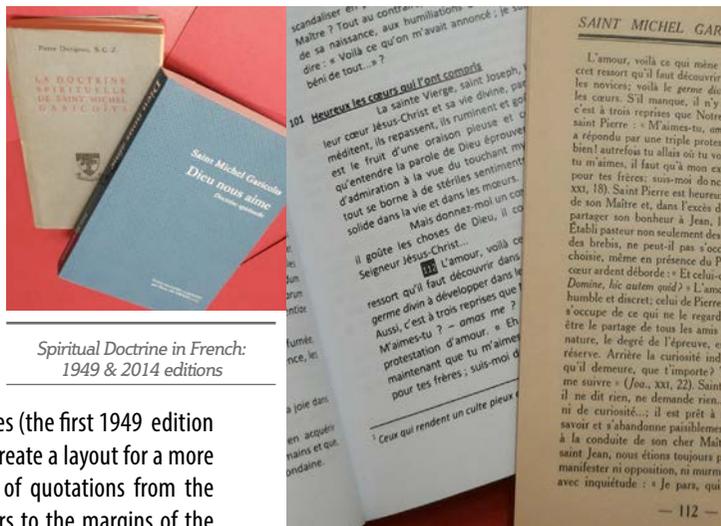
“The secret spring”, cfr. DS § 101

THE LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION, SINCE THIS IS WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT, FLOWS LIKE A LONG RIVER WITH MANY TRIBUTARIES, THE SOLE ORIGIN OF WHICH IS A WORD, THAT OF THE SAINT OF BETHARRAM. IN 1949, FR DUVIGNAU SCJ FAITHFULLY COLLECTED THESE WORDS IN A SINGLE VOLUME DESTINED AT THE TIME FOR A FRENCH READERSHIP. THE TIME HAD COME TO OFFER THE SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE IN A NEW SETTING. HERE IT IS WITH AN ADDED ATTRACTION.

In 2013-14, while the General Council was engaged in putting the letters of St. Michael Garicoits on the official website of the Congregation in four languages, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart SCJ was engaged in a related work: developing a new edition of the *Spiritual Doctrine*.

The goal was to provide not only newly printed copies (the first 1949 edition is out of print), but also to create a layout for a more user-friendly identification of quotations from the *Doctrine*, by adding numbers to the margins of the text, to be reproduced in all other language editions. Since the readership of the *Doctrine* is no longer, as in 1949, exclusively French, a reference system for all languages has become necessary.

This new layout was employed by the Etchecopar Region which is about to publish the Spanish edition. Thus with this way of numbering the text, common to both languages, references to quotations from the DS will be valid in both French and Spanish. The English edition, especially useful for our young people in formation, is already a work in progress. While still awaiting an Italian edition of the *Doctrine*, the *Spiritual Master*, translated by Mr. Mario Grugnona with the collaboration of Fr. Ernesto Colli SCJ, will soon go to press.



Spiritual Doctrine in French:
1949 & 2014 editions

In the past, references to the *Spiritual Doctrine* indicated the page number where the quote appeared in the French edition, e.g.: DS 112.

Now, the reference in the new edition, will indicate the number (inscribed in the margin) of the paragraph in which appears the quoted text, e.g. : DS § 101.

NB Like all Betharramite source documents published in the past, our present Rule of Life still refers to the 1949 French edition of the DS. Not to worry! This new 2014 edition also carries the old 1949 page numbers in a small black box. (Pictured above)

The religious concluded the meeting with the celebration of a Mass of thanksgiving for the years of dedication of our brothers Ignacio, Tobia, Wilfrido and José. The laity, who cooperate closely with the Betharramite communities in the field of education in Paraguay, joined the celebration.

celebrated the canonisation of St Mariam Baouardy and also the year of Consecrated Life.

It was great to have members from other Vicariates at the celebrations, namely from Italy India and Thailand.

The life of Saint Mariam and the leaf let about the year of Consecrated life which was prepared by Br. Michael SCJ displayed in the church and many appreciated it.

As Parish Priest Fr Anton Madej SCJ welcomed everyone. Fr Wilfred Perepadan SCJ was the main celebrant, and Fr Austin Hughes SCJ preached on St Mariam.

Region

England

Mariam ► October, 16 - At St Werburgh's Parish, Clayton, the English Vicariate ce-

NOTICES FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Decisions of the Superior General & Council

During the meeting the General Council on October 10th, the Superior General, with the advice of his Council, **approved the appointment of Fr Aldo Nespoli as Superior of the community of Albiate** (Region Saint Michael, Vicariate of Italy) until the end of his mandate as Regional Vicar.

In November, the Superior General received from the Congregation of the Insitutes of Religious Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life **the indulgt of departure from the Congregation for Fr. Robson Leite** who is now incardinated in the diocese of Campanha (Brazil).



France-Spain

Porte aperte ► Pau, October 11. In his apostolic letter on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis asked the religious to make their consecrated life more visible. The Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Bayonne, Lescar and Oloron, whose Delegate for Consecrated Life is Fr Laurent Bacho SCJ, organized in "St. Ursula" College, Pau, a day with "open doors" to the faithful willing to better understand the reality of consecrated life and religious families in the area. Fifteen religious congregations joined the initiative. They prepared and displayed some posters. The religious of Betharram also played an active role. Father Jean Paul Kissi SCJ and Father Gabriel Pornchai SCJ, with Br Emile Garat SCJ prepared and displayed a poster presenting the Congregation. Fr Laurent and two sisters of the "Good Shepherd" shared their personal experience as religious with a group of adults. Father Philippe Hourcade SCJ guided a workshop for high school students and Fr Pornchai for college students. The day ended with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by the Vicar General of the Diocese, Fr. François Bisch.

Assembly ► On October 27th took place the assembly of the Vicariate at Bétharram. The Regional Superior was present and addressed the religious members on the theme of mercy, a key aspect of the betharramite spirituality.

Ivory Coast

Fraternally ► On the occasion of the beginning of the academic year 2015-2016, the lay associates, guided by Fr Sylvain Dansou, gathered for the introduction of the theme for this year: "rediscover and experience the mercy of God through the spiritual doctrine of Saint Michal Garicoits" ... Always forward!



Paraguay

Lambaré ► 6-27 October - At the inter-Vicariate meeting of Paraguay, held at the Retreat House «Our Lady of Betharram» in Lambaré (Asuncion, Paraguay), Msgr. Ignacio Gogorza SCJ celebrated 60 years of religious life, Fr Wilfrido Romero SCJ the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination, Fr Tobia Sosio SCJ 50 years of religious life and Fr José Larrosa SCJ 25 years of priestly ordination. During the first part of the meeting, Sr. Maria del Carmen Barrios STJ, vice-provincial of Teresian Sisters of Paraguay, presented the new icon of religious life in Latin America for the period 2015-2018: The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. «In the embrace full of affection of these two women, consecrated life catches a glimpse of the joyful proclamation of God who does not deceive humanity and calls on all nations to proclaim the arrival of the One who can satisfy our inner longings... and to sing our Magnificat”.

Among the other religions

3150 KM, 46 HOURS TRIP (ON CONDITION THERE IS NO TRAFFIC...). THESE ARE THE INDICATIONS OFFERED CALMLY BY GOOGLE MAPS TO HELP MAKE THE TRIP FROM BANGALORE TO HOJAI, IN THE STATE OF ASSAM WHERE WE ARE TOLD THAT THE POPULATION IS 64,9% HINDU, 30,9% MUSLIM, AND 3,7% CHRISTIAN (THERE ARE ALSO SIKH, ANIMISTS AND BUDDHISTS). LET'S REMEMBER THAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A POPULATION (MAINLY RURAL) OF ABOUT MORE THAN 31.000.000! SOMETHING TELLS US THAT FATHER ARUL SCJ, SUPERIOR OF OUR COMMUNITY IN HOJAI, MUST OFTEN MEDITATE ON ARTICLES 128 AND 129 IN OUR RULE OF LIFE.

Jesus is our mirror. Our Lord Jesus is our role model in all we do. The 1000 days of his public life shows us how He lived with all the walks of life, different faiths, different authorities. As Our Founder St. Michael Garicoits rightly puts things in clear saying this and one has to imitate Him closely. Following the footsteps of our Founder in following Our Master, I too find joy in practicing our way of life among the other religions. I feel that in practicing the rule there is always some struggles, joy, peace, sometimes disappointments and at times one gets wisdom. As I am newly appointed to be the mission in charge of the North East of India that is Assam, the first thought ran into my mind was, "Am I worthy to take up such a huge responsibility?" I am not experienced enough to handle situations that arise or the issues to solve. But thanks be to God for all the strength that He gives me. Thanks to my community members, Fr. Jesuraj and Bro. Michael, and two religious sisters' communities namely the Sacred Heart Sisters and the Notre Dame Sisters. After the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene's encounter with the Risen Jesus is the strengthening passage for me personally.



In that episode we would see that Mary wanted to cling on Jesus but Jesus would commission Mary to tell the disciples that He would meet them in Galilee. It means to me that Jesus is going ahead of His disciples to Galilee to prepare the place, settle the issues, solve the problems etc; I too am experiencing the same joy that the disciples felt meeting Jesus in Galilee. In my case, before I could reach Hojai, He was already there to guide me and to prepare the way for my mission. Assam is the State with various languages, cultures, ethnic groups, tribes and religions. Hojai, being part of Assam, reflects the same. Hojai in particular is like Jericho of

the Old Testament and the New Testament. As I compare Hojai with Jericho, it is a city with majority population of Muslim and Hindu Communities. Our Christian population is very minimum. Here only I am strengthened to witness my way of life. Before coming to Hojai, I was in a parish as an assistant Parish Priest in Bangalore. The place as well as the people were familiar to me. I picked up the language quiet well; there I was happy and comfortable to live my life as religious and as priest. It gave me greater joy. I used to go for house visiting, praying in the houses, praying for sick etc, so to say I had created my comfort zone so strongly. Breaking that comfort zone and coming out was really a tough one. But in Hojai things are different.

Here in Hojai I have to play a dual role. To be the Administrator and the Pastor. As an administrator and head of the institute, I meet various kinds of people from all walks of life. In my meeting with them I try to put some Christian



Article 128

We recognize that...“there exists among so many individuals and peoples, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, a hope, perhaps unconscious, to know the truth of God, about humanity, and the path that leads to freedom from sin and death.”

We wish to be faithful to the teaching of our founder: “I know that God never stops speaking in the depths of souls. I know that in these depths, there is an incessant fermentation, animated, powered by the hand of the Creator, and which asks as from afar in the midst of shadows, of groaning and noise of all kinds, to respond and to abandon oneself to the divine purposes of God.”

Article 129

As religious of the Sacred Heart we seek in other religions and cultures, those longings for God, “rays of that truth, which enlightens all men”, “seeds of the word” and “riches that by his generosity, God dispenses to all nations”, “sown in the spirit and in the hearts of men through the rituals and customs of peoples”.

understanding to them whether in dealing with the parents of the school children or children themselves. “This priest is different from other” - That is the compliment people give. It is all because of the formation I received as a formee. At the end of my conversations with the people I shake hand with them and wish them “God bless”. This simple gesture of blessing touches many and they find in it something new and comfort.

Couple of months ago I had an opportunity to be part of an Ecumenical Dialogue which was organized by Brahma Kumaris (kind of religious Sisters in Hinduism). There I met a Hindu woman sage and a Muslim leader. Everyone had to talk on different theme. I spoke on “Insensitiveness of the human beings towards the other person.” I had prepared it in the light of the Gospel, but I cit-

ed also the examples from the Holy Quran and Bhagavat Gita, the Holy books of Muslims and Hindus respectively.

It was an open minded dialogue; many

benefited out of that dialogue and came to the deeper understanding of each other.

Then I meet people who are in government offices and I have good rapport with government officials. They too appreciate the work the Church is doing for the poor and down-trodden. In my relationship with them I remember the words of Jesus, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God.” Recently I succeeded in

getting some government help for our poor Catholics: mainly a cycle rickshaw, five spraying machines and three sewing machines.

As a pastor and priest I have different roles to play in the parish. The presence of Catholics is less. We have only 16 catholic families in and around Hojai. Some live in isolated areas. Being with them is joy. Being part of their lives is glory. Along with the help of the two sisters’ communities we re-evangelize them. Bringing them under one umbrella as Catholics in spite of their diversity gives meaning to our presence here. Fr. Jesuraj, our Parish Priest, giving his full energy in making regular visit to their houses and organizing prayer meetings and Bible sharing makes them feel that there is someone to guide them. They too develop the sense of belongingness to the Church.

In a way I am happy that at the end of the



Our brothers in Hojai: Fr. Jesuraj, Fr. Arul, Br. Michael

day we could make some changes in their lives and make their living condition better. Every one of us lives by a spirituality or belief system.

The Church has walked these many miles to reach the people those who are reachable or untraceable before in the North Eastern region of India. Now the people have their identity. Yet not all. My wish is that the Church and our Congregation should go little more further to reach the unreachable with the mission and vision of St. Michael. When that dream comes true I can boldly say we the Betharramite missionaries in Hojai have extended the Kingdom of God to further more kilometres with the help of God.

Arul Gnana Prakash scj